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THE HAPPY GARDEN



“The Japanese lanterns.”
(The Garden, 1851)

The
**HAPPY
GARDEN**

by
Mary Ansell



*With frontispiece & decorations
by Charles E. Dawson &
other illustrations from photographs*

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521
A. C. W.



"A little, double-fronted cottage, crowded in with laurels."

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. GARDENER'S PRIDE	3
2. JANE ADMIRES	17
3. CHERRY WALK AND LAWN	47
4. THE ORCHARD	65
5. A LONG WAY ROUND	83
6. OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY	101
7. ANNUALS	121
8. THE TOY RIVER	139

	PAGE
9. AN ALARMING INTERLUDE	157
10. GARDENER'S FAITH	175
11. SUN ROSE AND SPIRÆA	191
12. FRIENDLY FLOWERS	201
13. EXCUSE AND EPILOGUE	215
APPENDIX	223



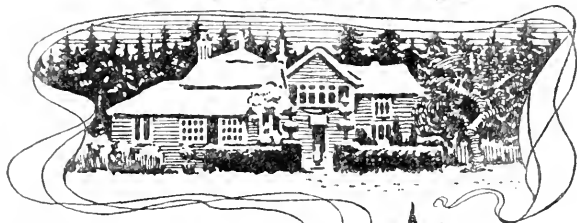
LIST OF PLATES

“ In summer nights the tea-house is hung with Japanese lanterns ” (colour)	Frontispiece
FACING PAGE	
“ Great tall fellows they are, where they go striding up the hill behind the house ”	10
The brick court where the laurels used to be	12
“ Where the conservatories had been I built out the room, with as much window as possible ”	14
“ The sundial is a trite person, and says in all weathers . . . ‘ Time can do much ’ ”	16
The window which curves into the drawing-room is the invalid’s seat, facing south	26
The fireplace that happened	28
“ Most of the woodwork is painted apple green. The walls are white and so are the door and window frames ”	30
The view from the lawn, with the round windows of the new study	48
“ The despised privet hedge is now ten feet high ”	52
“ The croquet lawn running into the pine-woods in the distance ”	54
“ Another wide border topped by a cherry walk ”	56
“ The carved urn on the lawn, bought in Venice ”	58

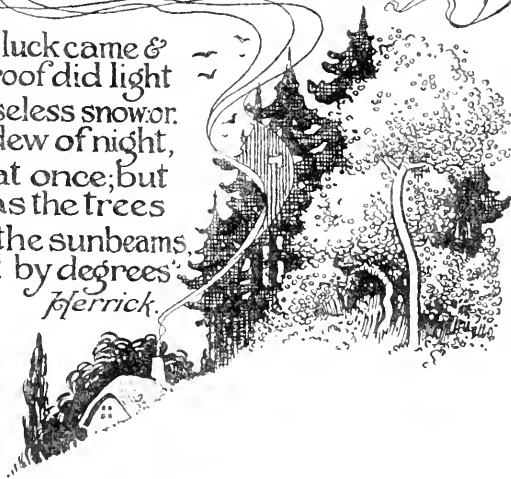
List of Plates

	FACING PAGE
The herbaceous border and lawn	62
Luath loves to drink at the bird bath	68
“ The pines go marching up the hill that was once a Roman camp ”	90
Nearly all the flowers by this walk are blue against the dark pines	92
“ Here you have the best view of the house . . . all corners, and gables, and angles ”	94
“ A narrow crooked path . . . between tall lilies, white foxgloves, and anchusa, and, best of all, delphiniums of every shade of blue ”	96
The annual border seen from the edge of the wood .	122
The annual border in September, tobacco plants, asters, and autumn lilies	132
“ In a little pool . . . stands the Dolphin Boy of Verrocchio ”	150
Steps down the rock garden	192

GARDENER'S PRIDE



So good luck came &
on my roof did light
Like noiseless snow or
as the dew of night,
Not all at once; but
gently, as the trees
Are, by the sunbeams,
tickel'd by degrees.
Herrick.





THE HAPPY GARDEN

I

Gardener's Pride

To live in London and to possess a garden in the country is to be in the position of an Anglo-Indian mother whose children are in England. In the winter and spring you snatch a Sunday here and there to see how your flower-children are growing up ; all is not well : you have fearful presentiments : they are not what you had planned and dreamed and hoped ! Your gardener crushes you with his expert professional knowledge : he discounts your enthusiasm as severely as a tutor discounts a mother's love. Summer comes. The flowers are beautiful, but the garden is not really your garden—it is not intimate ; the gardener has provided a brave show, like hundreds of other brave shows, but the whole lacks form, atmosphere, breeding, manners—what you will. Here and there it is as though the flowers were shy and timid, as though the spirit had been bullied out of them

The Happy Garden

by their scientific training. They do their best, but sadly and self-consciously ; they look mournfully out on the world, and say :

“ It isn't really any good. The world is much too busy for the likes of us ! ”

Many are tucked away or killed by crude colour, for there still lingers in the gardening mind something of the bad tradition of bedding-out, and the reproduction of old patterns, without regard to the ground lines, or the background, or the view. There are gardeners (and mine was one of them) who are excellent virtuosi, but miserable composers. They can carry out without really grasping the significance of what they are doing, and often grumble until the scheme is carried out. If it succeeds, they forget the designer, as the actor forgets the dramatist, and the musician the composer. If it fails, they do not conceal their rejoicing. The relation between gardener and owner is very delicate and subtle. Sometimes it is difficult ; always, if the owner lives in London, and can only give intermittent care to the preparation of the summer glowing festival. In that case, it is wise to give your gardener glass-houses, and fire him with an ambition to win prizes at the chrysanthemum shows. That will, at least, keep him from expending too much energy on the garden, and

Gardener's Pride

some of your pet schemes may be saved from devastation.

But the situation is impossible. Half a garden is almost worse than none. Really, to create a garden, it is necessary to fling away ambition, social pleasures, to reduce natural responsibilities to a minimum, and, if you are a man, to retire on a certain income. If you are a woman, then marry an artist, an author, or a clergyman, and make it clear to him that your garden is to be the central idea of both your lives, stipulate for an adequate allowance to meet the temptations of the autumn catalogues, select your friends, discard your acquaintances, and set to work.

Such a programme sounds monstrously selfish, but, indeed, gardening is a very serious business, as serious as literature, or stocks and shares, and much more serious than most of the professions ; and it has the blessing that there is no money to be made out of it. In other arts there is the dreadful necessity of pleasing the publisher, or the picture-dealer, and as many of the public as can be wheedled into interest ; between works, imagination and energy are exhausted in haggling. The gardener has none to please but him- or herself, and he (or she) is never wholly pleased, for the garden will never be perfect, it will never be finished. As the

The Happy Garden

gardener develops, so must the garden. A spinster's garden would never satisfy a wife ; an unhappy woman's garden would make a happy woman weep. But it is essential to be happy in a garden, and happiness is so enormously a matter of luck. The means for it may come into your hands when you are not ready for it, or when it comes, you may waste the opportunity by timidity, or through some fond imagined need for sacrifice. Slips and failures which hardly emerge into the region of admitted fact may snatch it away ; but, for the purposes of a garden, an effort must be made to grasp and hold it, or the garden will suffer.

Perhaps I don't really mean happiness, but rather that condition of strength and courage when all the events of life can be accepted as one ; and it is perfectly clear that sorrow is only the cloud drawn over the sun, or that certain watery joys are like the misty moon, foretelling days of rain. In the garden one is glad of rain. Indeed, one is glad of everything, except, perhaps, caterpillars, slugs, blight, June frosts, weeds, and incompetent seedsmen ; and then even these blackest of all evils serve only to make success all the sweeter when it comes, and the July pride of a garden is a very mighty thing.

I am proud of my garden, proud with that salt

Gardener's Pride

of humility which dabbling with the earth imposes on all nice human beings (and it makes the nasty nicer than they would be otherwise), for it is perhaps the one positive achievement I have to show. Therefore, I show it to the world in much the same spirit in which my cat, Peter, shows me the moles and fieldfares he has caught (he despises them as food), or as my friends among children display their staggering drawings, with legends in drunken capitals to inform me that the lines and smudges are a cock, a house, or a steeple with a dog climbing it to eat the weather-vane !

So I present this book of words as my garden, though it may be that it is no more like my lawns and trees, and borders and flowering shrubs, than my friend Hookie's lines of green and red are like a horse. Still, perhaps there will peep out of the pages what the garden is to me, and, with a careful study of it, historically, geographically, geologically, romantically, sentimentally, and sensibly, something of its brilliance as it shines in green and mauve and blue. Or the dark glimmer of the pine-trees may gleam forth, and its pattern be imprinted on the minds of others who have felt the charm of growing things. When Hookie, a small imp, with an angel's face, brings me his drawings of green and red—his pattern—I feel closer to him. He gives

The Happy Garden

me pleasure, and wins pleasure from me. My garden is my pattern, and there are not enough to see it, if I am to believe those who come. John Smith comes to see me. He admires :

“ Ah ! If only Jane were here ! ”

Jane will never come, and so this book is for her. I take her by the hand, ask her to trust me, and make allowances for any exaggeration into which my exuberant pride and delight may bring me, and lead her along my yellow road that rises between dark pines—like a golden river sometimes—and at the white gate we stop. I turn to her, and say :

“ Forget London.”

And it is very necessary to forget London : that is what I have been doing ; or rather, I have been trying to see it in perspective : out of seven million people, how many are there who can do that ? London is not allowed in my garden, nor are movements, or sociology—that queer disease of the new century—the great thing is to be happy, and, if you don't like me, at least to be pleasant about it.

Here you are at my gate, about to be submitted to a fearful test of your character, for it may be that you will dislike the place, or like the wrong things, and in that case, I shall believe, perhaps arrogantly, that you are at fault ; for, indeed, there

Gardener's Pride

is no trickery in the garden. The river is a sham, there is a sham butterfly on the window and a dish of sham fruit in the hall, but these are honest shams. They ask to be admired only as shams. Now there are sham books and sham pictures which ask to be admired as the real thing, and very often they succeed, and it is notorious that sham artists and sham men of genius are very prosperous ; but a sham garden is inconceivable in these days. Nature herself is the medium with which the artist works, and Nature is, above all things, honest. She takes dreadful revenges for lapses of taste and any attempt to dodge difficulties.

Have you forgotten London ? It should be easy, for the lie of the land assists you. Between the house and the railway station are two hills and a valley. London and all its works fall away behind you, as you breast the top of the first hill from the station. In front of you are miles of fairly wild country : pines, moors, rivers, hills, heather, lakes. Here and there Cockneydom has left a dirty thumb-mark on it, but that is easily avoided, and with us, in our clearing of four acres, you are as free as you may be in all England. There are people who find the crowds of pines as oppressive as the millions of people in London ; but often that passes, and the charm of the woods comes over them. They

The Happy Garden

delight in their rich scent, and the roar that comes from them as they swing in the wind. Great, tall fellows they are, where they go striding up the hill behind the house. But that is not yet.

Have you forgotten London ? You left it behind you at the top of the hill, as you gasped at the sight of the purple hills flung like a mothering arm about the valley. Then it was gone, and you swung down a green tunnel, beech, and birch, and oak interlacing above the road. Over the little river you came into the pines ; then dogs bark at you—a great Newfoundland, sober, solemn, and a clownish sheepdog—glorious weather, of course, and this is the house that I built.

It had a sad little romance before I came to it : the pitiful small tale of an old gentleman who loved well and truly, and lost, and was so wounded that, for modesty, he gave the trunks of all his trees trousers of laurel. There were laurels everywhere, and the little hedges there by the kitchen door and the green kennel that makes the house semi-detached—the sheepdog sleeps in it—(“ Down, Billy ! Where’s that whip ? ”)—are all that is left of the mania of his blighted love. He also built the red-gabled wing out to the back, and did it surprisingly well.

But, oh ! my dear, you should have seen



"Great tall fellows they are, where they go striding up the
hill behind the house"

Gardener's Pride

the house ! A little double-fronted cottage. crowded in with laurels, and inside as dark as it could possibly be made. What was it made the English of the last century hide away in dark corners ? Of what were they ashamed ? Dark curtains, dark mantel-places, dark wood, two conservatories—one a “lean-to,” at the back of the dining-room—and, as you entered, a little lobby, looking up a straight stair with banisters wrapped in dark red plush. Even in his house, you see, the old gentleman could not stand naked wood. Strange to what eccentricities disappointed men will cling for comfort ! On either side of the little lobby were two rooms, two corresponding rooms above them, and two more above the new kitchen wing : all ugly, dark, hopeless ; but I was carried away by the situation—the pines, the hill behind, the garden (if it could be called a garden then) running into the wood. A heron flew over the house, and that settled it. I had brought some seeds with me, for, to take possession of a piece of land, one must set things growing, and there and then I planted them. That was my first active piece of gardening. Having planted the seeds, I saw the house-agent. That was all some years ago. But at once it was *my* house and *my* garden, and I felt the better for it, and yet I think it was never really my house until now.

The Happy Garden

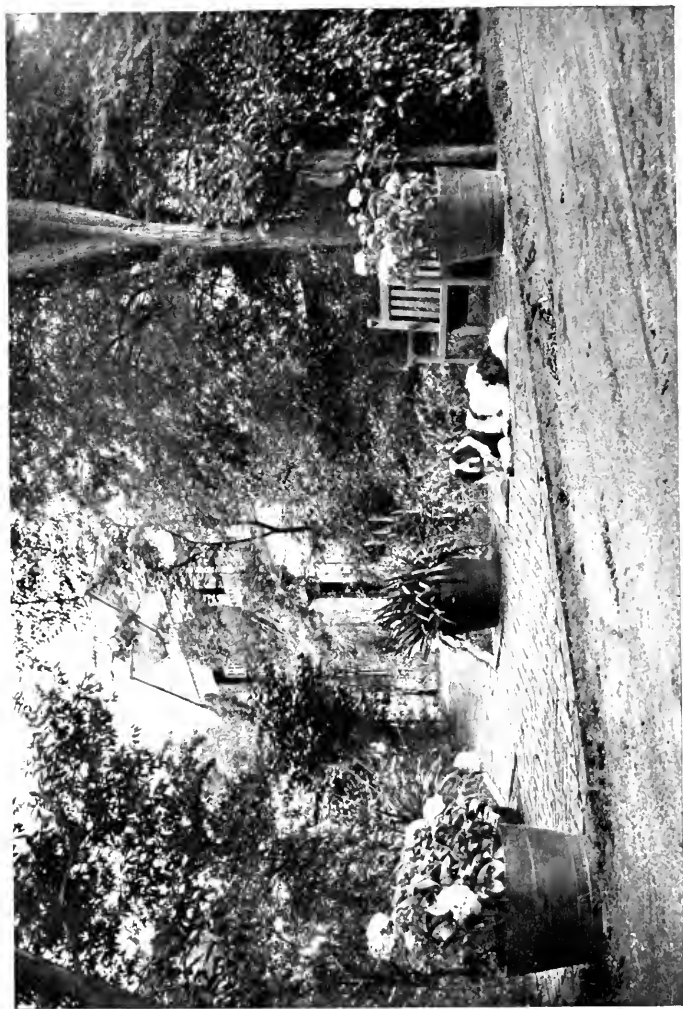
For a long time it was only a cottage in the country, a sort of half-and-half position which no house should be called on to endure. Live in the country and have a place in town, by all means ; but to reverse the process is unnatural. The garden suffered for it, and so did I.

My dear Jane, we are not yet inside the gate. The two dogs you have seen ; somewhere about the place are a man, a cat, a tortoise, a gardener, a gardener's wife, a gardener's baby, six green lizards, gold-fish, toads and tadpoles, servants, and part of a boy. All wonderful, of course, and all living in the life of the garden.

There is another gate just along the road, but nobody ever uses it.

Come in and have some tea ; talk, and let me talk, and you shall see.

Here, where the brick court is, until a year ago, was nothing but the old gentleman's laurels, forcing the acacias, and the almond tree, and the may trees, up to an unnatural height. Nobody could ever find the front door. People used to go to the kitchen, and the scullery, and the drawing-room window, blundering from shyness to confusion, until we rescued them, and then, often, they were so bewildered that they were unhappy, and thought of nothing but the time when they could escape.



THE BRICK COURT WHERE THE LAURELS USED TO BE

Gardener's Pride

Last year the laurels were all cut away, the hedge was opened, the brick court and path were laid down, and the front door is now visible.

Yes, it is pretty, but it will be much prettier next year.

That is the formula which you must keep in your mind all through, and if you admire because you think I want you to, I shall stop, and order the car at once.

Solomon's seal, polygonum, with rhododendrons for a background; giant orange lilies for the autumn, scarlet tulips and scarlet anemones for the spring, scarlet poppies and white lupins for June, fill the wide borders on either side of the brick path that brings you to the door. From the gate—that nobody ever uses—a pergola covered with roses also leads to it. In June, it is a mass of blossom, pink and white and crimson.

Come inside.

The man tells me that there was once a Frenchman who made quite a charming book out of a Journey Round his Room, beginning with the pictures and ending with the bed. We are not so hard put to it as that, but, if necessary, we will have a chapter on beds, as an appendix to the observations on herbaceous borders.

You see what I did? Down came the wall on

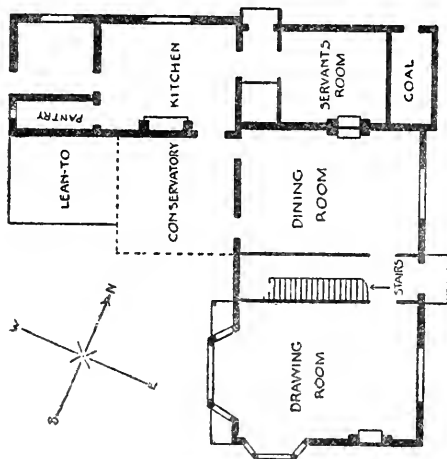
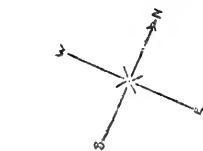
The Happy Garden

the right-hand side of the staircase, the lobby was thrown into the room, the three bottom stairs were turned at right angles, the red plush was removed from the hand-rail, leaden panes were let into the inner front door, the room was painted white—indeed, the whole cottage was painted white—and as soon as possible the conservatories were removed to the farthest away part of the garden, for no self-respecting house can endure a “lean-to.” Where they had been, I built out the room, with as much window as possible. That gave me a long and spacious sitting-room hall; we eat at the new end of it, and use the old as a sitting-room. And then it was ready for colour : blue with a touch of purple, and a cushion or two of old red ; you know the rare red that goes with purple ?

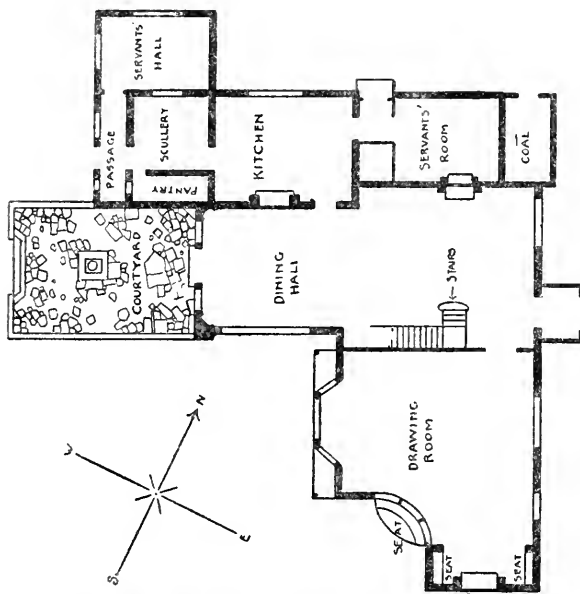
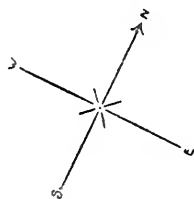
Brass and copper, and a few sober pictures ; books, seed and bulb catalogues, Gauntlett’s fascinating list of flowering shrubs ; convex mirrors to give jolly pictures of the room at night ; a Cayley Robinson, a Lee Hankey ; pieces of sculpture from the shop near the museum at Naples ; some pretty things from Florence ; old pieces of furniture picked up here and there ; old china—it is all blue in this room, and sits around the top of the panelling and on the long window-sills ; Thorwaldsen medallions, bought in Rome by the man’s great-aunt in the



“Where the conservatories had been I built out the room, with as much window as possible.”



ORIGINAL PLAN OF THE HOUSE



THE HOUSE AS ALTERED

The Happy Garden

1830's—nothing has really been bought of set purpose : things only that have pleased me, and have clamoured to be mine ; for charming things are often impatient of the company they keep in shop-windows, and, when they see the right person coming along, they cry :

“ Buy me ! Buy me ! ”

And, let me tell you, they hate collectors.

One thing I'm rather proud of—the radiators. I could not bear the sight of them, so I set to work to make them look like something else. Do you see that curtain of mauve silk behind a door of brass latticework ? It conceals a radiator ; in the drawing-room, it is between two bookcases that are under the window, and a green curtain hides it ; a boot cupboard and medicine shelves are on either side of it in the bedroom ; and so on in all the rooms. Nobody suspects that they are there, and they banish all the cold damp terrors of the winter.

The little courtyard out there was where the “ lean-to ” stood originally. The yew hedge surrounding it is doing famously, clipped into ingenious patterns. The stones came from a church, and one of them bears the remains of an epitaph.

The sundial is a trite person, and says in all weathers, even when it is not telling the time :

“ *Time can do much.* ”



"The sundial is a trite person, and says in all
weathers . . . 'Time can do much'."

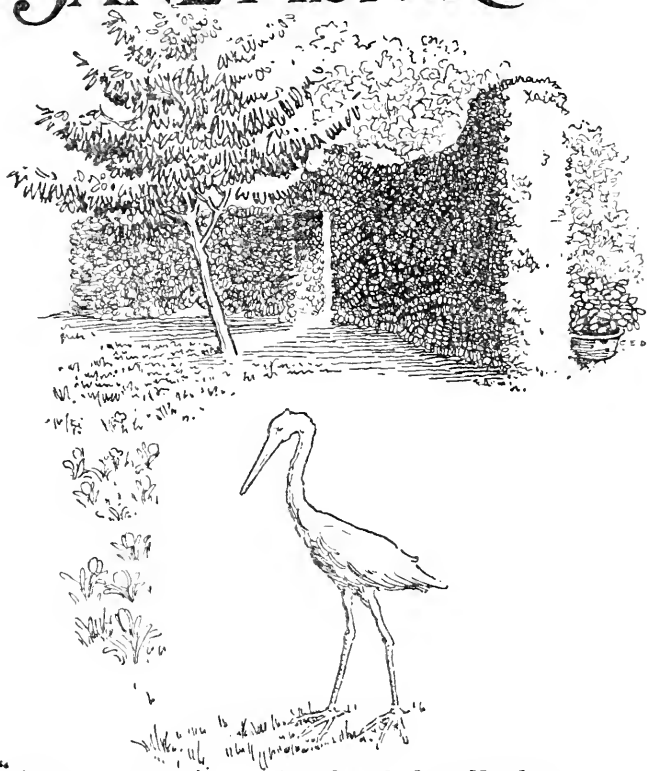
Gardener's Pride

In the courtyard a succession of flowers bloom ; beginning with tulips, and the double white arabis, and, later, purple ten-week stock and mauve and blue viola ; clematis vitalba throws its generous growth across it at a height of twenty feet, and the beautiful ceanothus " Gloire de Versaille " covers the white wall with its delicate blue.

My dear Jane, of course, you shall have tea, and I won't say another word !

But I do want you to see my new Japanese garden.

JANE ADMIRES.



"Sancho Panza beheld all this
with wonder & delight."

Don Quixote.

II

Jane Admires

THERE is more than one famous instance of a guest arriving for one night and staying for years. I have arranged for Jane to stay, at any rate, until the book is finished, for already she has shown the most intelligent appreciation ; as, of course, she was likely to do, being my own invention ; but that is not so very certain either, for I am sure the characters in fiction do not always or altogether approve of their authors, and often, at nights, there are meetings in the study of gentlemen and ladies of all periods, and many votes of censure are passed. At such gatherings, if anywhere, you will find sound criticism, though here and there it must be vitiated by personal grievance. They know their authors through and through, and their lives suffer from the weaknesses of their creators, and too often they have been misrepresented or made to act in violent contradiction to their natures. They protest, and it is very entertaining to hear Steerforth on Charles Dickens, and Jekyll and Hyde squabbling about

The Happy Garden

R. L. S., and Mrs. Tanqueray vowing that she never did and never could have said :

“Where’s the pride in being a married woman among women who are married !”

Living down here in a room which is almost all windows, looking on to green lawns and climbing roses, has made them realise how and where they are wrong, and it is only very, very few who have vitality enough to escape through the window in the twilight and parade themselves in the garden. Don Quixote leads the way and wages war on all the villains of romance. He has a splendid time of it.

And as with the creatures of imagination, so with actual people. They come into the garden, and all the parts of themselves which they have borrowed from other people and books and plays fall away from them like the skin of a sloughing snake. They are surprised to find themselves genuine, and, if by chance borrowed words of admiration come to their lips, they swallow them down, or, if they are out, they apologise at once, not so much to me as to the nearest flower, who is naturally gracious.

And I have not escaped the test of the garden. It keeps me real, insists on it, and relations between us are strained directly I begin to pat myself on

Jane Admires

the back, or to adopt a manner that is in the slightest degree artificial ; and when I look back on it, it seems to me that the trees must have suffered agonies in the days when I came down from London for only a month or two in the year. Even now there are difficult moments, such moments as bear their fruit in the caustic comments I hear from the characters of fiction in the study. It is a dreadful thought that in the evening when their day's work is over, the flowers discuss my failings, and the lingering bees hear and carry away the tale of them to their hives. Bees sweeten their honey with gossip, and the things they overhear and never understand. Bees think perfectly clearly about their own affairs, but about human affairs they are quite silly—almost as silly as human beings, without their excuses.

Strange things do happen in the garden, strange shapes and shadows hover in the woods, and on moonlight nights in spring and autumn one is often sure that odd creatures run and chatter, and dart away so quickly that one can never see them. Seeing is not always believing, and believing is very little a matter of seeing. What you see, dear Jane, is only a millionth part of what you might see, only a thousandth part of what you will see when you have trained your eyes to know—more or less—

The Happy Garden

what to look for. What I want you to see first of all is that all this has not been made, but has happened. It has grown ! . . . Show me your garden, and I will tell you what you are, and if you like me, you are bound to like my garden ; for gardening, like every other art, is an implacable mirror of the soul, and as yet there is no curtain of false criticism between it and you.

Do you know Mr. Robinson ? There is his book, "The English Flower Garden," one of the most revolutionary works in the English language. Quite respectable, I assure you. Real, healthy revolutions always are perfectly respectable ; perfectly normal, perfectly sober, and they happen slowly and painlessly—except to the people who were making money out of the old order.

Now, that old order was a matter of bedding-out, mosaics, plaster-work ; niggling, tiresome reproduction of old patterns, without regard to soil, position, surrounding country, or even common sense : all the vices of French gardening without its charm or quality. It reached its climax, I believe, when the Crystal Palace was laid out long ago. Half-a-dozen different flowers were enough for that sort of work, but they were not enough for Mr. Robinson. He had discovered the cottage garden, where, if there was no design, there were

Jane Admires

often harmonious masses of colour, formed of flowers which the professional horticulturist despised or ignored. Then he set about smashing the pattern gardeners, and stuck to it with such patience and practicality that he has produced the Royal Horticultural Society with its 12,000 members, and built up a tremendous industry.

It is not a cult, but rather a passion. The Robinsonian garden is one of the greatest civilising agencies in England, and as for the Freedom of Women, John Stuart Mill fades away before Mr. Robinson as a champion. Mill provided arguments : Mr. Robinson provided action, and a sphere of activity. If a woman has wrongs, let her take them into her garden, and if her wrongs have destroyed her perspective and sense of proportion, the acquaintance with the laws of Nature which she will gain cannot fail to put her right. If she feels very strongly . . .

Quite right, Jane ; no politics ! You shall see the rest of the house.

The kitchen is through the door there : red-tiled floor, plenty of window, with leaded panes, plenty of air ; rules of housekeeping hanging up which no one ever keeps : they are there to remind everybody that there are such things as rules, and that, if it comes to a pinch, there is such a thing as discipline. It is so important, whoever you are, to

The Happy Garden

know your place without being blatant about it. That is really the only law we observe. Everybody and everything in its place, and when by accident we get out of it, the force of habit is there to swing us back. Human nature—and dog nature and plant nature—is so elastic.

You, Jane, shall have no difficulty, for directly you show signs of getting out of hand you shall cease to exist. You have neither past nor future, and only such present as I choose to give you.

(Jane grows very meek. She is an odd little person ; very ordinary, very like everybody, and very unlike what everybody likes to think she—or he—is. That is to say, that she is not at all romantic. She is rather pretty, though she might easily be prettier ; rather intelligent, though she just lacks confidence ; in fact, she is the sort of person who thinks of the right repartee an hour after she ought to have said it—which is so like everybody. And that makes her an admirable audience, for she only asks to admire, and if she can admire honestly, then she will have one of the rarest pleasures granted to mortal woman, and also to all the imaginary creatures with whom we surround ourselves ; all the queer creatures who, in myriad, impossible ways, have the experiences which we ourselves escape.)



THE WINDOW WHICH CURVES INTO THE DRAWING-ROOM IS
THE INVALID'S SEAT, FACING SOUTH

Jane Admires

Here is the drawing-room, almost altogether a summer room. It used to be an oblong with which it was practically impossible to do anything. The nicely leaded door into the garden was there, but, do what I would, I could not make it *my* room, until it occurred to me that I wanted a dressing-room out of my bedroom, which is above it. Therefore, I decided to build out ; but not the whole length of the room ; that would take more of the garden than I could spare. Half the room then, to make another window. That made an L shape, and it followed naturally that the window in the heel of the L should jut into the room instead of out of it. At once that gave an unusual tone, and it had the practical advantage that, outside, a seat could be placed in the bend and a little roof built over it ; it faces due south, and is a regular sun-trap, even in winter. Invalid visitors are placed there, and they have a view right away to the river—in reality not much more than a hundred yards, but that is quite enough space in which to dream. There are no immense distances here, but there is a sense of peace, a feeling of being closed in by the pines, and, I hope, an atmosphere of happiness ! There should be, if joy in creation, which is the only joy, counts for anything.

The Happy Garden

You like the fireplace ? I'm not sure whether I designed it myself, or whether it happened. I hope it happened, and at any rate I shall say it did. Plain bricks, you see, built in an undistinguished pattern. The draught is got from a grating outside, and a fine blaze we can make with pine cones and branches, a fire so cheery that it must thaw and dissolve the coldest reserve. The flames flicker and lick the green needles of the branches, which shrivel into glowing, red-hot spears, and the sparks go flying ; we throw on logs, and the fire roars and the cones open crackling.

Most of the woodwork is painted apple-green. The walls are white, and so are the door and window frames, so that you can have the chintzes as riotous as may be. The rosewood spinet adores the flowers in the summer, though, poor thing, it can only tell you so with half the compass of its notes, and those cracked ; but it gains expression in the scent that comes from the bowl of lavender there by the round window, and it finds company in some of the pictures, old engravings of its period :

“ Cupid stung by a Bee.”

Bless him ! There he is taking comfort with a round-legged lady, who could never understand the woes of child or man ; and she is almost as charmingly stupid as the Curly-headed Family over there :



THE FIREPLACE THAT HAPPENED

Jane Admires

five bewigged and becurled heads, faces of people who have never seen, never heard, never thought, never felt anything, and always lived as people did in those days—(Do they still ? . . . I wonder)—on imitation emotions, imitation joys, imitation hopes, imitation sorrows, so that they are angry and hurt, as such people always are, at the reality and delight of the two *putti* of Correggio scratching inscriptions with their arrows. They are hurt and bewildered, just as Sacred Love is hurt in the Titian picture in the Villa Borghese, by what the Profane Lady is telling her of life. They like the coy maternity of “The Duchess of Devonshire” better, and they have no difficulty in pretending that the nurse is round the corner, scowling, and fearful of the harm that the Duchess may do “The Rt. Honble. Lady Georgiana Cavendish” before Sir Joshua has finished. And what they can make of the modern Italian impressionist etching is more than I can imagine. They live there, posing and smirking and quite content to ignore everything but their own beautiful selves ! . . . Unfortunately, they cannot see the sampler in the corner by the fireplace. It is by :

Mary Fleetwood.

Aged 12.

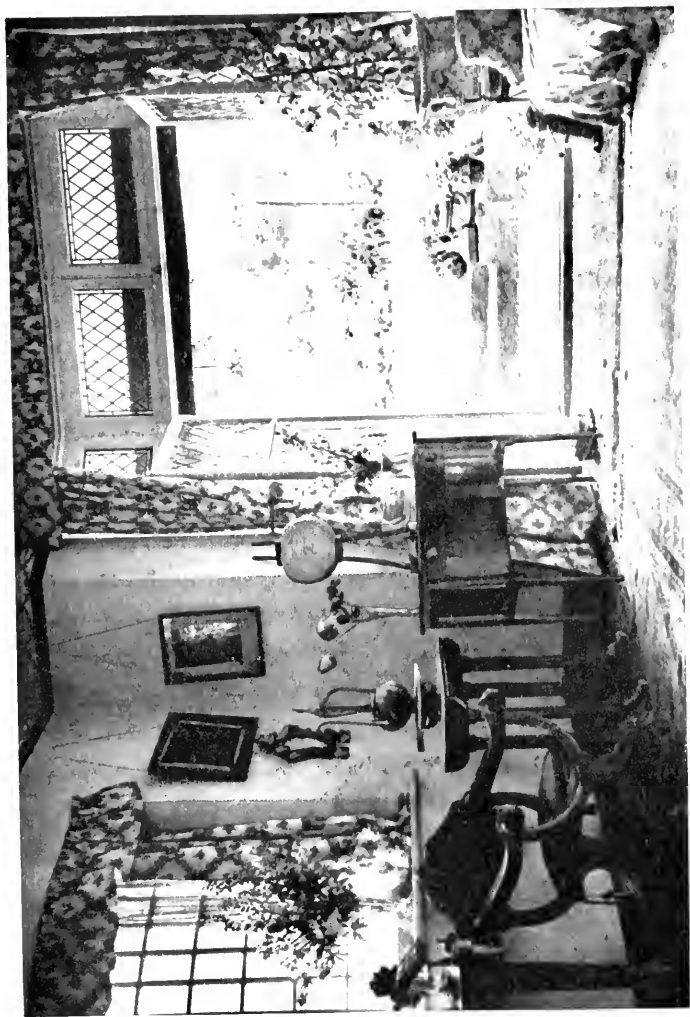
And her old school dame burst into poetry in

The Happy Garden

her enthusiasm over the achievement ; unless the verse is a pure convention :

" Mary Fleetwood is my name,
My work's enclosed within this frame;
And by this token you may see
What care my parents had for me."

It is a marvel of patience, done in single stitch on silk which has faded to a delicious colour. It is so delicate and so fine, that one would swear that Mary Fleetwood's eyes must have suffered. But, no ; Mary Fleetwood married, had children, met her full share of trouble, and lived through it to the age of eighty-one, and did not take to spectacles until she was over sixty. We shake our heads, Jane and I, and say regretfully that these things do not happen now, and we forget that samplers were only sewn because the school dames exhausted the fund of their learning in the morning, and had not the wherewithal to fill in the afternoons, so that, when Mary Fleetwood had swallowed her crumbs of reading, spelling, arithmetic, and the use of the globes, her idle hands must be preserved from the friend of Dr. Watts. Therefore she sewed her sampler ; and now little girls have their little heads crammed full of things which even we were afraid to know, and actually are taught to follow the processes of the loves of the plants, with the exposure of which Erasmus Darwin so shocked Mary



"Most of the woodwork is painted apple green. The walls are white and so are the door and window frames"

Jane Admires

Fleetwood's mother. . . . Little girls know so much more than we knew when we were young, and when they are women they will be so little wiser, as we showed ourselves so little wiser than Mary Fleetwood when it came to facts, and the foolish thing that was there to do.

Jane sighs, and turns away from Mary Fleetwood's only work of art, and stands before a coarse, full-bellied, dark-blue jug that came from Bruges, and has borne many a quart of Flemish ale to Flemish lips. And she gives a timid little chuckle of delight at a pair of silly Dresden figures striking attitudes worthy of the Curly-headed Family, under their blue canopies.

Next she sees a drawing of Miss Ellen Terry as "Nance Oldfield"! It is not at all like Miss Terry really, though in the line there is caught something of her vitality, her grace, and the charming quality of life that make her one of England's rarest and most precious possessions.

I whisper to Jane.

"No—not really?" says Jane.

"Yes. Indeed!"

"What! . . . She came here!"

And Jane thinks of the incomparable woman descending from the (stage) sky against which she always sees her in her funny little imagination; and

The Happy Garden

I would not for the world destroy Jane's illusion. But I know something of the stage, and I know that it was not the actress that was so rare so much as the woman ; and it was the woman that was, and is, so treasured.

When Jane has recovered from the flutter of her vicarious acquaintance with the illustrious and great, I take her farther on her zig-zag pilgrimage through the drawing-room. I insist that she shall admire the twelve dancing Dresden children bought at Aix-les-Bains, because they were so like Isadora Duncan's entrancing babes ; and the carved marble lamp that came from Florence out of the amazing shop on the Lung 'Arno, into which you plunge out of the brilliant Florentine light into a dim region where ages, and centuries, and whole worlds whirl round you, presenting you with relics of Napoleon, and Louis XIV., and Lorenzo the Magnificent, and various Popes, and Catherine of Russia, and modern Birmingham. In the dim light gems wink and shimmer ; men, and dogs, and stags, and horses run stiffly across old tapestries, and ivory beasts grimace and whisper of the east ; and there are swords, and guns, and arrows, and medals and pagodas. . . . And it is all fascinating. . . . And when you long to walk back into your own life for a moment or two, out you step into a street

Jane Admires

and find yourself opposite a shop glowing with oranges and lemons. . . . Are they genuine, or did they, too, come from Birmingham ? . . . Genuine enough as things go ; and this is Florence, and over against Fiesole is a great white bird. . . . Heads are all craned to look at it. Indeed it is no bird, but an aeroplane : and this is very much the twentieth century.

There's a digression ! . . . To recover from it, look out of the window at the roses, and the white wall over which hang laburnum, clematis, and ceanothus brilliant ; and there, in the larch, is a squirrel frolicking ; one of the rascals who take all my filberts and Kentish cobs in the autumn. You would never think that the road is there, only twenty yards away. Such a jolly road, leading from the world, through the wilderness, down even to the sea, whence the winds come full of melody that they murmur to the pines. . . . And the herons squawk like gulls, so that here it is easy to satisfy the natural craving to pretend that everything is something else. . . .

Now you shall admire the brass and copper, and the mirrors which make such charming pictures. To my mind, a mirror should never be hung where it cannot show its reflection and make a little picture of its own. In the convex mirror above the

The Happy Garden

spinet you see the room like a Dutch painting, a Peter de Hooch, with a glimpse of the courtyard and the umbrella roses beyond. All through the summer months I have purple and mauve sweet peas in the copper bowls, and they show finely against the green net curtains which I discovered after a long and desperate search for something to replace white muslin and silk as a foil to chintz. They fade in the sun, but that makes no difference. We have a dyeing-day, and dip them and the darkish-blue tablecloths, and the man's shirts, and anything else that clamours to be blue or bluer than it is.

Here at the windows, to hold back the chintz curtains, are apples of green glass with ormolu leaves, which set me thrilling when I look at them, though I have had them for more than three years. I'm afraid they are Empire, and, strictly speaking, out of place in a room devoted, like most of the house, to Queen Anne ; but principles and rules are most effective when they are broken here and there, and, after all, Queen Anne is dead, and the Empire and many other fashions have passed over her memory. And certain things are so charming that I must and will have them, whether the rest of the furniture likes it or not. What is a chair or a table that it should dictate to a free English woman ?

Jane Admires

I think you must see the rest of the house before we set foot in the garden. Stand for a moment at the front door, and look along the hall. You did not appreciate the Hepplewhite chairs with their blue cushions, or the narrow Tudor table, which doubles its length at one touch, and again at another, or the Florentine baby sitting on the *rose du Barri* cushion reading his little scroll of music. His brother is up there writing : the composer and virtuoso. I believe they have another brother blowing his own trumpet, but that is what no one is allowed to do here—except myself—so he was left behind in Italy.

Here is Peter-cat, a smoky blue Persian with golden eyes. He has been very friendly with us lately because the kitchen cat has had four kittens, which he cannot endure. When first he came from London he was filled with enthusiasm for the simple life, and undertook to live only by what he killed. He had his moment of revolt against modern civilisation, but, like the rest of us, the habit of good living and ease was too strong for him, and he comes to us for food, and having his neck tickled takes the place of sport. He is beautiful enough to be entirely selfish without unpleasant consequences, and he is irresistible when he comes in with the smell of honeysuckle, or roses, or lavender strong upon him.

The Happy Garden

(Don't take him on your lap, or you will not be able to escape for hours! Ah! He has gone upstairs to lie on a purple quilt which he finds essentially the right background for his colour scheme. You shall see.)

Upstairs, under the Japanese prints, with a chance of peeping at yourself in the Wellington mirror at the top.

Now for the study—straight ahead! It is the latest room of all, and it finishes the house. Alas! I have a plan for building out one more room, which we don't want, and the man clamours for a study away from the house, somewhere in the wood.

"So like a man!" says Jane.

I think it is only male discontent, and entirely because he has a friend who has a study that was once a cowshed. . . . If it ever became serious he might be turned into the washhouse.

"He couldn't want anything better than this," says Jane.

Men always want something better—so do women!

It faces south and west. Two walls are all taken up with long, low, rounded windows with leaded glass and window-seats with green cushions.

Jane Admires

The sheepdog loves to sit on them with his head hanging out of the window, watching the shadows come and go, and listening to the carts going by on the road. . . .

Very often you can get a good effect by inversion. When it came to furnishing the room, I remembered that I had seen a black carpet in Paris ; so the floor is painted white and the carpet is black with a green rug in front of the fireplace ; the curtains are green, with white cashmere inner ones close to the window. When it was finished, it still seemed to lack something. A piece of old red tapestry was tried as a curtain at the end of the bookcase, where there are still no books, and has been a joy for ever.

Jane has seen it ! . . . The convex window over the fireplace, with the green net curtains and the "Winged Victory," in miniature, striding through them. The room was built over the extension of the hall, the flat roof of which had originally been left as leads under the windows of the passage. These had to be blocked up, and the problem arose how to light the passage and at the same time to have a fireplace in the wall. Being a study, books must occupy every available wall space there was. The problem was easily solved by having the window over the fireplace. . . . And the chimney ? It is

The Happy Garden

good for chimneys to go crooked ; so this one goes to the right, and interferes with nothing, though perhaps it makes the wall a little too hot for the books. The little window looks on to the passage. Stand on the hearth, Jane, and look through it, and I will show you something more than a white door and wall as a background to "Victory."

Jane stands on the hearth, on tiptoe, for she is very short, and her funny little face peers through the window at me with childish wonder and expectancy in her eyes. I open the door of the little mauve spare room, and her mouth forms a round O as she gazes through the room and out over the apple trees and flower border into the woods. Suddenly she disappears, and comes round to join me in raptures over the deep mauve carpet and the chintz with its mauve roses, and the Japanese prints on the white walls, and the Queen Anne furniture, and the peep of the gardener's absurd little doll's house, and the view along the drive up to the garage and the fruit garden.

It is a perfect little nest for Jane, and she says so. She shall have a volume of Nietzsche, and she shall sleep there between the chapters. . . . She will be no trouble to the servants.

She is as curious about the doors in the passage as the wives of Bluebeard.

Jane Admires

Yes, Jane. That's the bath-room ; nice and cool with its white tiled walls and green-lined bath. And you can't go in there, because that's the man's dressing-room, and he may be hiding, as he often does when visitors come.

I have difficulty in bringing Jane back to the study, where she does not show all the respect that one would like. She is not at all impressed when I tell her that books are written at the desk, and I am afraid that the old superstitious reverence for literature is dying out, which is no bad thing, for I am sure it is good for both parties for men of letters to realise that they have a great deal in common with their audience. . . . And she is almost indifferent when I lead her to the bookshelves and show her the august company gathered there, with a few interlopers : Shakespeare, and Meredith, and the New Dramatists, all rather hurt by J. M. Synge's preface to "The Tinker's Wedding," with its disrespectful reference to their Ibsen. And Kipling hobnobs with H. G. Wells, while Tennyson shudders as far away from Swinburne as he possibly can. "Jean Christophe" denounces mountebanks, and protects himself from Stendhal on the one hand and Balzac on the other, with the lives of Beethoven and Tolstoi written by his godfather, Romain Rolland. "Don Quixote" finds himself sandwiched

The Happy Garden

in between "Roderick Hudson" and "The Blue Bird," and never dreams that they are anything but books of chivalry. . . . Stevenson and Henley are united in wondering when literature is going to digest the mess of sociology which it gulped down so hastily as soon as their protecting presences were removed. And Robert Burns roars at them all :

*"Man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that."*

But Jane is not stirred. She has no feeling for it all : dramatists, poets, preachers, teachers, knaves, fools, hypocrites, angels and glorious man, she lumps them all together, and she sees a copy of "Richard Feverel," and says : "I think that is such a pretty story."

That is the limit of her criticism. She asks for a story. If it can be called "pretty" she likes it ; if not, not. It is not that she has no power of appreciation so much as that she has only a limited power of expression. If by any chance she were to read "King Lear," and were held by it, she would call it "pretty" ! . . . She is never likely to read "King Lear," however, for she has taken her Shakespeare as read, and has dismissed him long ago, though she would be quite angry if she ever heard the supremacy of his genius called in question.

Jane Admires

She likes the reproductions of the Pompeii frescoes above the south window, and the odd little coloured engraving of an old cricket match, and the portrait of Keats, whom she finds so like her brother Mark, who used to write verses in the albums of her school friends ; but he did something—and went to Canada. . . . But she is so oppressed by the atmosphere of literature that she is rather unjust to the study and goes away without even looking at the gabled roof of white paint and oak. A ceiling seems so unnecessary.

I explain to her what an advantage it is to have the extra space between the ceiling and the roof in the room, and go on talking at length, until I find that she has darted back to the little mauve room ! . . .

She had heard the baby at the gardener's cottage crowing. That is all very well, but Jane was invented for sightseeing purposes, and she has to see the sights, and eschew sentiment. Jane ! If you don't come at once I shall turn you into a Cook's Tourist.

She comes at a run. We peep into the best spare bedroom with its rose-bud wallpaper, and its two little white beds, and the single bookshelf running round two-thirds of the room, containing all the second-rate fiction which has been banned by

The Happy Garden

the censorship committee of the study. Peter-cat is lying on his purple quilt. Jane coos at him, but he ignores her.

So—to *my* room. Honeysuckle and roses nod at the window at one end, clematis and jasmine hang a curtain at the other. Always the windows are wide open, and the night sounds come drowsily up: the squawking of the herons, the rattle of the nightjar, the fluting of the toads, the barking of the gamekeeper's dog down the road, sometimes the nightingale, always the wind in the trees. . . .

The little white shelf that runs along the wall by the side of the bed is a speciality of mine; it is so useful for so many things—all the things one loves in the way of books and knick-knacks, and a portrait or two. And my pet pictures hang above it, some Botticellis in pretty Italian frames; best of all, the Carpaccio boy from Venice; the perfect angel playing a lute. Here I sleep, or, when I do not sleep, I lie and dream colour and form and new schemes for house and garden, or think the funny half-thoughts that are all that will come to a person's bed. Sometimes the bed is like a boat, and with sails all out away we go dreaming, dreaming, and laughing, as we dart out on the golden sea, which is the end of all things. . . . Sometimes there are dreadful

Jane Admires

visitors : moths, spiders, bats, all the horrible things that are said to fasten in a woman's hair.

There is no door through to the dressing-room, only the narrow Gothic aperture. That is because the only fireplace is in the dressing-room, and because a room so tiny has no business to have a door. There is a curtain which we will draw when you have had a glimpse of the green ivory dressing-table outfit, brushes, powder-box, etc. etc. The name on them is pricked in with gold, in the old way. They began their lives as blue and turned green by degrees, like all the old green knives. If they had begun green, they would have turned brown and yellow ; the lovely green is faded blue !

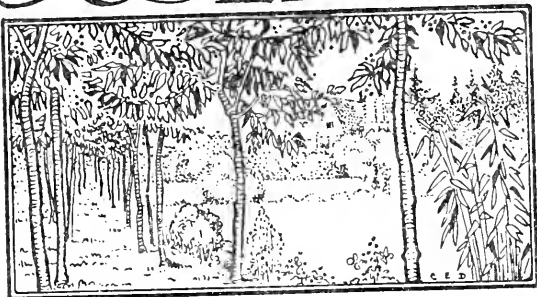
Well, then, the chest of drawers in the dressing-room is Queen Anne, those in the bedroom Sheraton, also the wardrobe. Queen Anne, of course, must object to the Italian element, but it broadens her mind, and helps her to shake off the Churchill influence. She took it all so seriously at first—as seriously as the people for whom modern tourist Italy was invented—that the room was in danger of becoming a little sombre. However, that little gay cushion on the chair there, and the chintz-covered box—in which are kept oddments of every description—dismissed Culture for ever.

There remains one gap to be repaired. One of

The Happy Garden

the four great Ghirlandajo frescoes is missing, and the reproduction of the Venus di Milo is so bad that some day I shall smash her, and when next I visit the Louvre I shall tell the Goddess of Beauty, and she will thank me for seeing to it that there is in the world one less of the million, million offences committed in her name.

CHERRY WALK & LAWN



Friends, books, a garden, & perhaps
his pen,
Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
And nature in her cultivated trim
Dressed to his taste, inviting him
abroad—
Can he want occupation who has
these? "*Cowper's Task.*



III

Cherry Walk and Lawn

To be really thorough, I would have to set out my lease, a proper parchment, with its scrolled writing, saying loudly :

“This Indenture Witnesseth——”

But it would be polite on your part to take the lease for granted, and to assume that I have not squatted, or taken any advantage of the confused law relating to Real Property in England. There is a blot on the escutcheon of the garden. Originally three acres, my predecessor's gardener took in a few yards every year by putting, first of all, trees outside the fence, then the fence outside the trees. It was his delight, too, to plant everything with a view to its being seen by the passer-by on the road. Did I tell you that the garden was entirely overlooked from the road ? But I soon saw to that, and one of the first things I did was to plant a fir hedge, and it is now quite ten feet in height, and that, with all the flowering trees and shrubs, most

The Happy Garden

effectually hides us, and also keeps away any motor dust that may come our way.

Where was I ? Oh ! about taking in the wood by the old gardener. I was more honest ; not that I had any rooted objection to his practices ; but I found it simpler to go straight to the landlord and ask him if I might not extend the garden a few yards into the woods on three sides. No objection was raised, and by taking in a little every few years, the estate grew to four acres of garden and four of wood, and, as the wire fence is invisible and the pine woods seem to go on for ever and ever, it is possible to sit on the lawn, or by the tea-house, and feel free of all boundaries and neighbours and legal obligations ; and, between seven in the morning and seven in the evening, when the post comes, to forget the world.

The daily paper is an intrusion at twelve o'clock, but that is just a joke, for journalists manage to make even the truth unconvincing ; and their facts are always much more distorted than the fiction of their *feuilleton*.

Jane has been sound asleep in her little mauve room distorting a perfectly peaceful and happy picture of a procession through a green Japanese gate into a representation of an execution. In her



THE VIEW FROM THE LAWN, WITH THE ROUND WINDOWS OF THE NEW STUDY

Cherry Walk and Lawn

confusion, the colour print on the wall by the window was blurred in her mind with an illustration of Tennyson's "Rizpah," which is a memory of her early youth !

Now for the outside of the cottage.

First, she is to see the view from the lawn with the round windows of the new study. There she is free from the literary atmosphere which so oppressed her, and can admire the effect of the green shutters and the white rough-cast walls and the brown tiled roofs. The old roofs of the original house were grey slate, which was not to be endured for a moment. To replace the slates with tiles was expensive and troublesome. Therefore, the blue-grey was blotted out with red paint !

Why not ?

The red soon tones down, and the effect is almost as good as tiles. But, let me add, it really is not quite so simple as this. I had to stand over the painters while they were working at it, and got them to rub in, here and there, some patches of brown paint, and, even green, in places, to get the artistic effect that is needed when you attempt to paint a slate roof. The result is so satisfactory, that when I explain to my visitors they are at once reduced to the proper admiring sense of the marvellous and say :

The Happy Garden

“ Good Heavens ! ”

All the new rooms, the addition to the drawing-room, the study, and the servants' hall, are roofed with tiles, so that it is easy to mark the progress of the house.

The blue *bambino* on the drawing-room wall looks its best when the virginia creeper is trailing over it, but it is always a relief from the white, green, and ruddy brown of the general scheme ; just as the old red curtain in the study quickens the effect of the black, white and green.

Now come through the green door into the little front garden and the brick court, and out into the drive, to see the north-west side of the house, and the gardener's cottage. There is the window of Jane's little mauve room, and the bath-room with the brass jugs—mostly brought from Siena—gleaming at the window. That nice long sloping roof is the servants' sitting-room, the very latest addition.

A tiny brick court is between this room and the privet hedge round the lower end of the orchard. In summer it is gay with tubs of fuchsias.

The gardener's cottage is an absurd little house, like a little tug butting at a great ship. Another brick court gives it a little garden of its own, walled in with espalier fruit trees.

Cherry Walk and Lawn

It was originally a coach-house, and the first man I had lived at the other end of the garden, until the County Council declared that it was illegal to live in wooden houses, even though you build them yourselves. . . . The car and the gardener's family changed places, and the coach-house was cut up into four rooms, each hardly bigger than the dog-kennel. Husband and wife and three children have lived in it happily enough, and husband and wife and crowing baby are living in it now ! . . . The baby, for the most part, inhabits the courtyard ! . . .

"Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too."

That is not true of the first gardener. He loved the greenhouse to the exclusion of the garden. He was unhappy and uneasy when he first came, because the conservatory had been abolished, and in all the garden there was no glass. He felt that his reputation and position in the neighbourhood were at stake, and, therefore, one winter, he built three glass-houses, and when I came down on a Sunday, met me with the announcement :

"There, ma'am. It is now a real gentleman's garden !"

I dared not tell him that it was never meant to be anything else but a woman's garden, *my* garden.

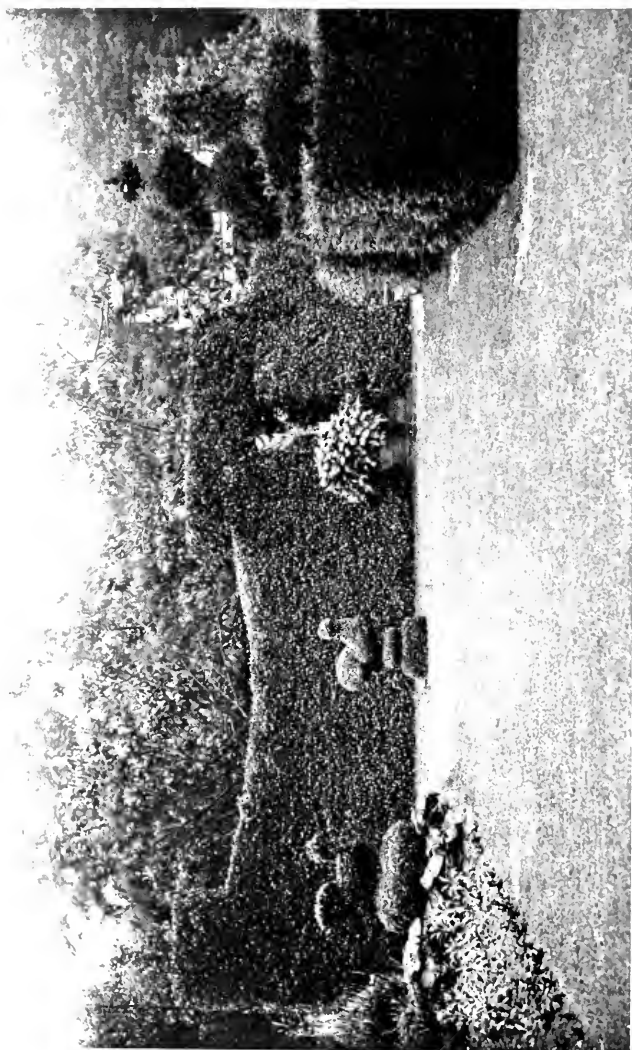
The Happy Garden

His successor, the present Man of Earth, has a better sense of the fitness of things. To him the greenhouse serves the garden, and I have not yet discovered any wayward ambition to show chrysanthemums. He is in all things a worthy servant of the garden.

At one time there were lovely peaches on the south wall of his cottage, but the privet hedge grew up and blotted out the sun, and the trees died, and, alas ! they cannot be induced to grow against any other wall. But inside the hedge is our summer dining-room, and the green wall shuts us in from the wind, while the cherry trees shelter us from the sun.

And just here I must say a word in defence of the much-maligned privet hedge. Mine was already there, a straggling ill-kept row of sturdy bushes. I hesitated for some time whether to demolish it, but it held out such possibilities of a quick shelter, that I decided against that ; and, instead, tried what could be done to improve it. The despised privet hedge is now ten feet high and four deep, is cut into turrets, and has a door through it for the maid to bring in the trays, etc.

The way lies past the yew hedge, and the chestnut tree to the lawn and the main courtyard, where the lions dwell, and the poppies grow in the cracks



“The despised privet hedge is now ten feet high”

Cherry Walk and Lawn

between the stones, and pink cranesbill rears little green forests in the corners. . . . A few years ago it was all lawn up to the drawing-room window, with a giant fir tree, which dwarfed the cottage and shut out the afternoon sun. That was cut down at the time when I had discovered the use of brick, and the first courtyard was laid out. Unhappily, I used good house bricks, and they crumbled away and became dust to dust, like mortal men. They were exhumed, and Yorkshire stone was put down, all round the corner of the house with a wide path extending the length of the wall. A bird bath was bought from Mrs. G. F. Watts, at Compton, together with the terra-cotta tubs for the umbrella roses—"Lady Gay" and "Dorothy Perkins." Of course, they don't really grow in the tubs. They would soon become pot-bound. The bottoms of the tubs were knocked out so that the roses can root happily in specially-prepared clay, and loam. They are very very happy there, and like the proximity of the honeysuckle and the Banksia rose growing over the drawing-room window. They have cranesbill worshipping at their feet and from every visitor they gain as much adulation as they can want; certainly as much as is good for them. They are arrogant and rebellious in temper, and always when they come to bloom they struggle against the

The Happy Garden

passing of summer into autumn, of autumn into winter, and long after the leaves have fallen and nearly all the plants have gone into winter-quarters they put out their defiant little pink buttons with a forlorn little swagger. But they have to submit like the rest of us and retire for the next year's work of covering up their crinolines, in which, at last, the horticulturists have found a use for the hoops of our grandmothers.

Weeds and ants battle for possession of the crevices between the stones. The ants I murder with paraffin, and as for the weeds, when they grow too rampant, I invite one of those visitors who burn to be of use to their hostess.

A hedge of dwarf lavender marks off the courtyard from the lawn, beginning by the stone steps with the lions—they came from Venice, and are called James and John—right round to the old apple tree that was struck by lightning, and now serves as a prop for climbing roses and wistaria, which, when it is grown tall enough, is to mingle with the laburnum growing near by. Inside the lavender, in the spring, grow crocuses and tulips, and by the time these are over the lavender has grown out over the stones. Over the round drawing-room window a *Reine Henriette* rose climbs about the brown roof, and near by a Judas tree



"The croquet lawn running into the pine-woods in the distance "

Cherry Walk and Lawn

gives us beautiful pink flowers in the spring, and later on its fine foliage ; a passion-flower twines itself above the Madonna lilies beneath another window, and laburnum and clematis Jackmanni bloom alternately over the wall that divides the front garden from the garden proper. . . .

I'll open the door.

There ; you see the brick court from the other side, and the rose pergola between the front door and the little front gate, and the clematis montana, and the acacias, the almond tree, what remains of the old gentleman's laurels, the berberis, polygonum, and the larches where you saw the squirrel.

He is still there. . . . Two of them ! Little red fellows. They will have nothing to do with their grey American cousins, and I believe the Americans eat out the Europeans. It is a terrible invasion : surely a case for the Monroe Doctrine.

Now, Jane—to adopt the manner of the professional guide—turning our backs on the eligible mansion—it is really a mansion, for it has two staircases—we find in front of us an extensive view of the croquet lawn running into the pine woods in the distance, and flanked on one side by a herbaceous border and a high hedge and trees, and on the other by another wide border topped by a cherry walk.

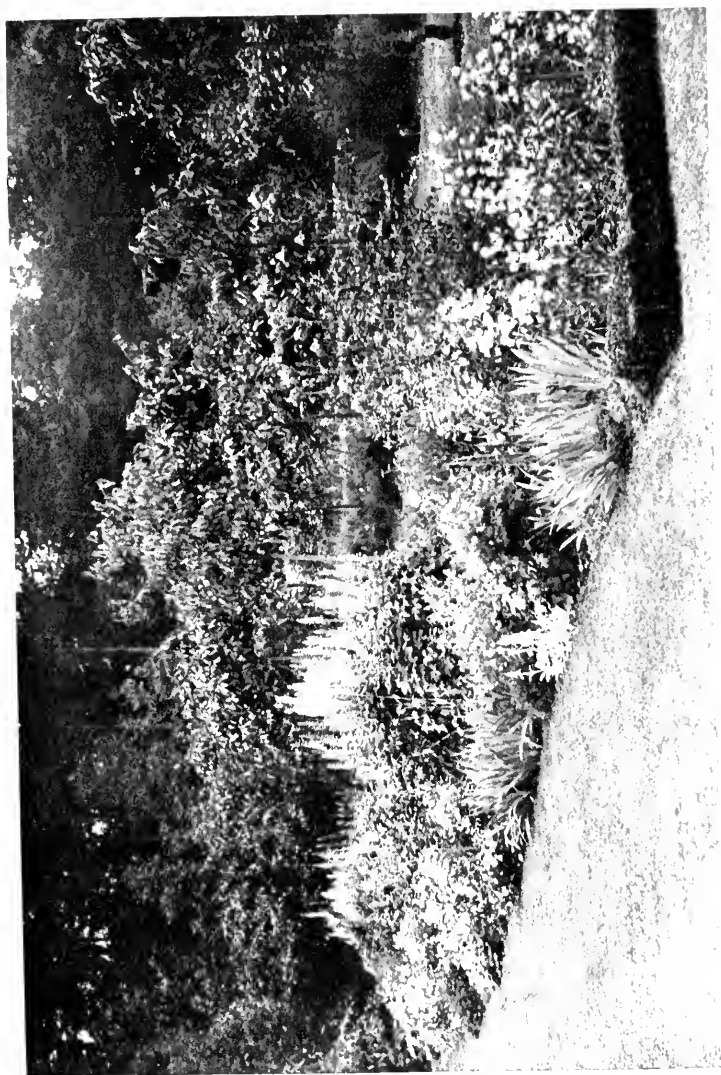
The Happy Garden

When you have made the tour of that you can go to sleep again.

The oak tree in the hedge reaches right over to the pines on the other side of the road, and is used by the squirrels as a bridge. For us, it is most useful to create an illusion : it makes it seem as though the woods were immediately on the other side of the hedge, and only the motors that go snorting by bring back the reality. Under the spruce tree, the home and birthplace of many birds, is St. John's wort and blue periwinkle, rampageous trailers that would take possession of all the borders if they were not repressed with a firm hand.

May and laburnum are lovely in the spring against the dark background of the pines, and the rowans are fully aware of their effective setting, and put forth masses of scarlet berries in the summer, which Cook makes into jelly, of an excellent tartness that makes them a serious rival to red currants.

Jane is hurt ! . . . Why *not* think of eating in the presence of beauty ? Why *not* think of beauty while one is eating ? Why not eat beauty ? Why not beautify food ? Why not—— ? At any rate, my dear Jane, it is beautiful to be alive, and one must eat to live, and I will not hear your ridiculous middle-class prejudices in my garden. I will not



“Another wide border topped by a cherry walk”

Cherry Walk and Lawn

have life split up, ticketed, priced, labelled, sold as a bargain and tucked away in a secret drawer.

I have bullied Jane into meekness, but she is growing more and more Victorian, like a little feminine Nineteenth Century that has walked from an ugly place of worship into a garden, and, in a frightened sort of way, announced herself as the Twentieth.

However that may be, here she is in my garden, and she has to see it all and to get the spirit of it into her veins, before she is allowed to go out into the world again. She shall live through the life of the garden, from snowdrops and crocuses to autumn lilies and Michaelmas daisies; she shall see the trees come to life, feel the sap coursing through them, follow them putting forth leaves, flowers and fruit; she shall eat the apple in my garden, and learn the wisdom of earth and sky, and so with a vision of what will be in the garden, she shall go back over the hills to be swallowed up by the world, and there she shall plant seeds that will one day bring forth fruit an hundredfold.

The great use of happiness is to make others happy. It is Shelley's "Sensitive Plant":

*"Which scattered love, as stars do light,
[Found sadness, where it left delight. . . ."]*

The Happy Garden

and if it be turned to selfish uses, it withers long before the coming of the eternal winter.

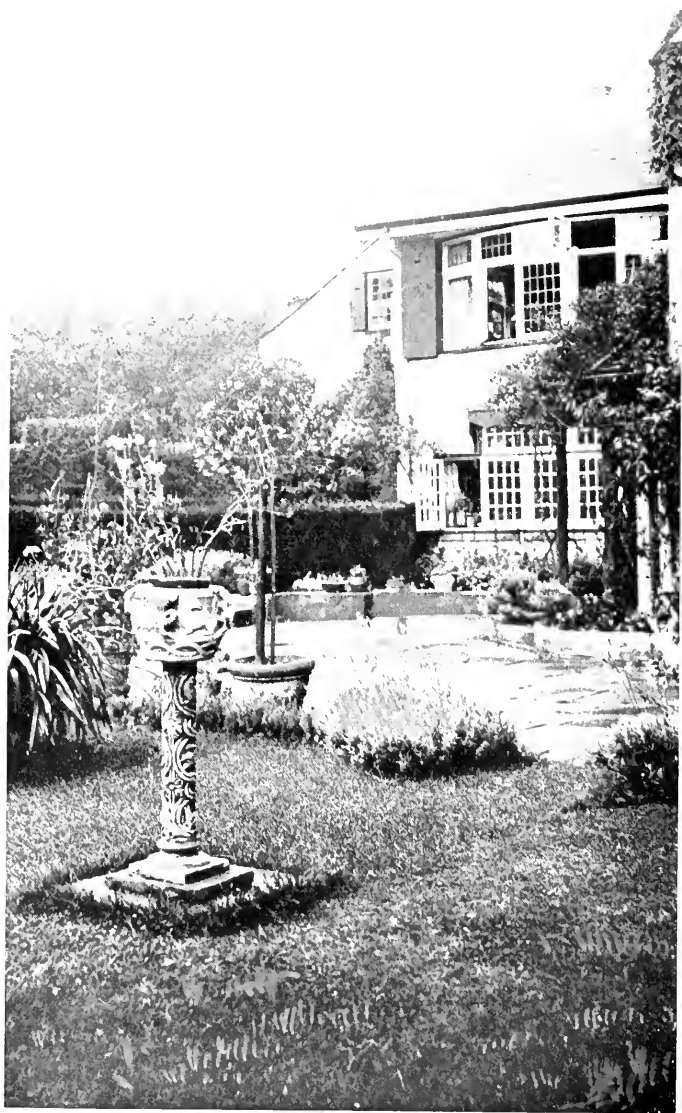
Sad poets, who have lost happiness, see winter in the garden, death almost before life begins ; and they have said charming, melancholy things, but by losing or abusing happiness, they have lost the sense of continuance. It is unreasonable to see winter behind spring, without seeing spring through winter.

Jane grows glummer and glummer. Talking of happiness is so depressing, just as there is a certain pitch of gloom which is an absolute tonic !

There's a peony which is almost vulgar in its insistence on being recognised : thrusting its way to the front and shouting down the lupins and delphiniums. Truth to tell, he is red in the face because they are so tall.

Mark the bees in the lily-trumpets and the monkshood, and the larkspurs. Each labourer, each day, sips the honey of only one flower. The bee flits from larkspur to larkspur, never from larkspur to Canterbury bell, etc. Each cell's honey must be pure, and perhaps each cell is labelled in a language which we cannot read.

I only know one thing certain of the bees, one thing of my own knowledge, and that is that they detest dogs, which makes me almost turn against



"The carved stone urn on the lawn, bought in Venice"

Cherry Walk and Lawn

them. And I would, but for M. Maeterlinck, who has made me sentimental about them for ever and ever !

Arbutus and Rhus cotinoides make a fine shrubby background for the flowers, which grow here as thickly as they choose : violas, cranesbill, poppies, lupins, anchusa, lilies, delphiniums, etc.

And so on, down to the dovecot, the bamboos and the rhododendrons. To see them rightly you must walk back to the courtyard, looking neither to the right-hand nor the left, for you must see everything in due order ; but you may observe the Madonna lilies growing by the long hall window, and the carved stone urn on the lawn, bought in Venice for one pound, though by the time it reached England by the “ little quickness,” it had cost three times that sum.

(Jane, being of a later generation than Mary Fleetwood of the sampler, is quick at figures, and in an astonishing short time has worked it out in *lire* !)

Now, dear Jane, you see the rhododendrons massed against the wood and the silver birches rising above them, under which we swing our hammocks, and the glimpse of the road through the trees, and the weeping elms half hidden behind the cherry walk.

The Happy Garden

Down the lawn once more—(I wouldn't throw the croquet ball for Billy, if I were you. He'll like you for it, but it isn't worth it)—to marvel over the giant lilies which grow, according to Miss Jekyll, in deep beds of rich vegetable mould in the Himalayas. It seems inhospitable, therefore, to invite such lovely exiles to grow in my light sandy soil, but I have done my best. A bed four feet down has been dug for them: a great grave filled up with farmyard stuff, and clay, and chalk, and leaf-mould, and the bulbs have been laid carefully just below the surface—and, wonder of wonders, they have prospered. No mother ever took greater care of her children. Last year, through ignorance—not neglect—I gave them too much shade, for they need to be protected from the morning sun. I buried them much too deep. They grew up heroically, hung out three glossy leaves, and rotted; and I had my only comfort in the knowledge that the same tragedy hung over the house and garden of my nearest rival, who is a formidably scientific gardener, armed cap-à-pie with all the books, all the newest inventions, and all the latest French dodges; and she has the advantage of a rich clay soil. The two tragedies were simultaneous. The exiles from the Himalayas pined and withered; tragedy indeed! for when they live they are ten

Cherry Walk and Lawn

feet high, with lily-trumpets nine inches to a foot long, hanging all the way up the stem—splendid aliens, whom all countries delight to honour. With them and the tall spears of asphodel by the river I shall be a proud and happy parent.

Bamboos again to the right of the birches. The border begins on this side of the lawn with good clumps of funkias and megaseas and iris, and spiræas. It is a shady corner, and these damp-loving plants thrive well here. All the flowers at this end are dark blue : delphiniums, monkshood, and blue thistles, veronicas, perennial cornflower, violas, dark blue cranesbill. Running in and out of these, are deep orange lilies, in large clumps, then a little pale yellow asphodeline, alstroemeria, gladiolus, the giant mullein, cheiranthus, almost the only yellow flowers admitted to my borders. White follows the yellow : pyrethrums, white iris, cornflowers, thalictrum, phloxes, and leads to pale pink, gladioli, phloxes, Canterbury bells, pink lupins, not to speak of the pink cranesbill, which grows apace and propagates itself as quickly as the poor in London slums. It creeps out on the lawn and destroys the formalism which should never by any chance be in a herbaceous border. From the pale pinks we come to mauve, and pale blue finishes the scheme. Amongst these are delphiniums,

The Happy Garden

gladioli, campanulas, Canterbury bells, cranesbill, iris, veronicas, and some grey foliage plants.

In the spring, there are Darwin tulips and daffodils and anemones scattered here and there, all down the length of the border to give colour, and primroses and primulas grow in the grassy bank, where the robins sometimes nest. Always, from May on, the border is a triumphant mass of colour. An arch of roses frames it as you approach from the orchard, roses growing over to the little pergola, by which the greatest wonders of the place are reached, places like the sunk garden and the Alpine garden, where the friendliest flowers grow and the earth has taken form and become intimate. The herbaceous borders are for decoration rather than for friendship. They are bands and frames of colour, put on as boldly and with as firm a hand as may be. No one could take liberties with a herbaceous border, nor could I ever breathe a word of confidence to any flower in the rabble. Nearly all herbaceous plants are great livers, loud voiced, lusty, Rabelaisian, and they would shout with laughter at me and my private thoughts; not unkindly, but it is always hard to think that laughter, whether of flowers or men, is not unkind.

The cherry trees are tender. In the spring, when the frail snowy blossoms are hung out against



THE HERBACEOUS BORDER AND LAWN

Cherry Walk and Lawn

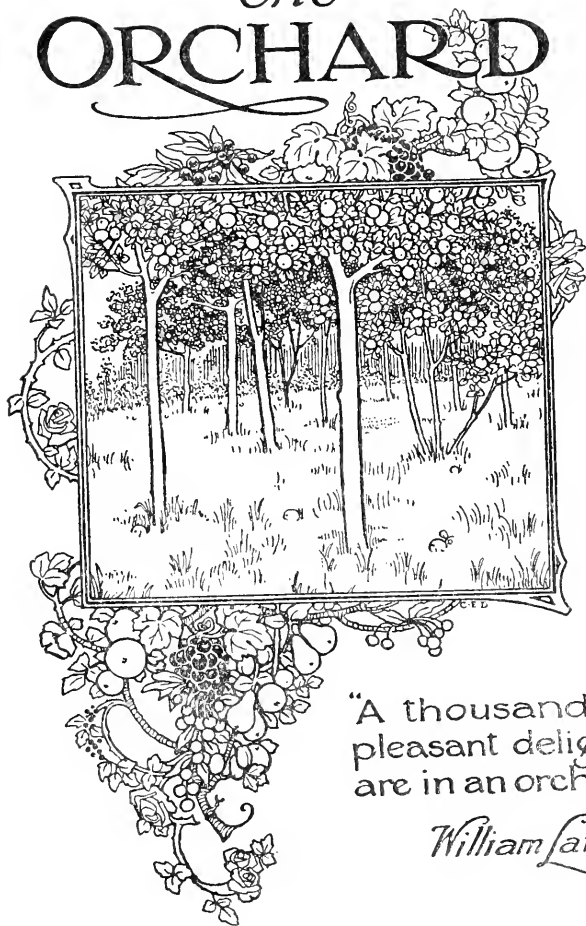
the sky almost, one is afraid to enter the little grassy avenue. Such purity is there ! It is a place for children, and young lovers, boy and girl, melting under the sweet burden of their love, stealing shy glances, sighing, thinking all the loveliness of heaven and earth is in themselves, and so big with it that they are afraid, hand in hand, to walk slowly to the mossy seat under the weeping elms !

Oh ! Jane !

Jane has squeezed a funny little tear out of her eye. It is running down her nose :

“ Let us go in.”

The ORCHARD



"A thousand of
pleasant delights
are in an orchard"

William Lawton

IV

The Orchard

I AM willing to stretch a point and swear that the nightingale sings in the orchard all through the season, though I am afraid he gave his farewell performance long ago. I have only once heard him, and then he was a good quarter of a mile away from the garden.

Perhaps the art of the garden is offensive to such a worshipper of Nature, or perhaps, like the poets, he can best sing of beauty when it is hidden from him.

The fact is that the nightingale never comes to the orchard, and, indeed, it is beautiful enough to stand in no need of romantic embellishment.

We eat in the orchard : lunch and tea ; dinner attracts too many insects to be possible or pleasant.

There is a green table and an old public-house settle under the cherry tree at the end of the privet hedge, where the della Robbia Madonna is enshrined.

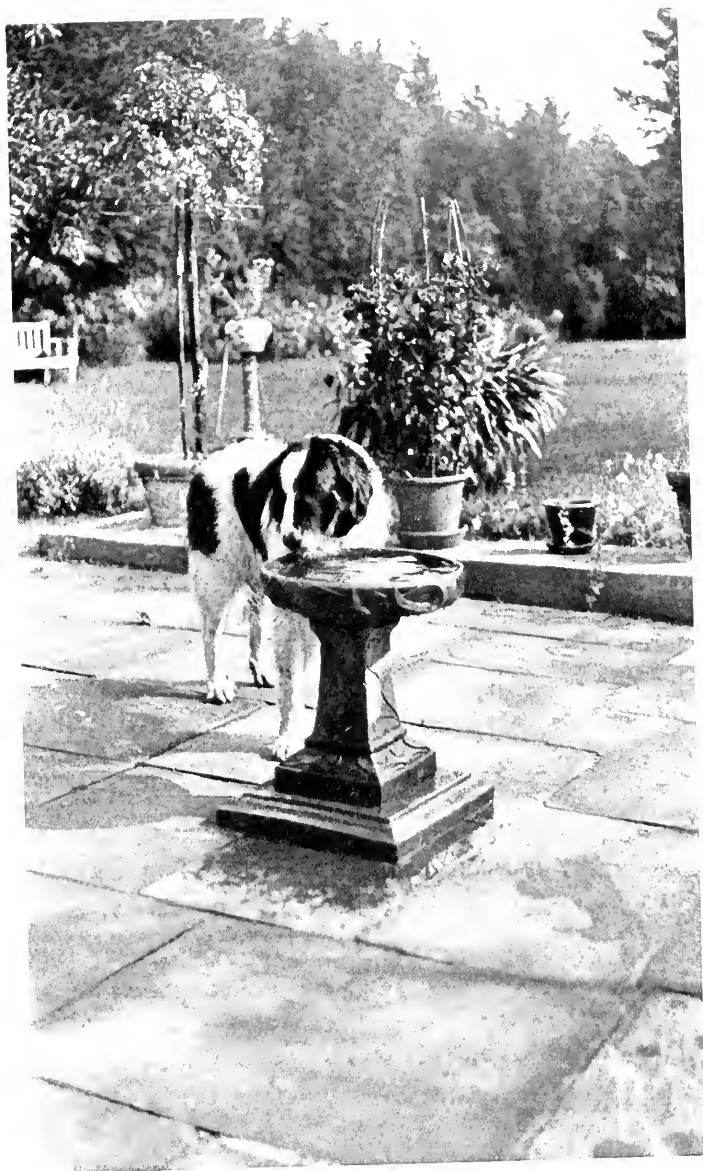
The Happy Garden

An old flour-bin serves to keep the wind from the spirit lamp, over which the coffee is boiled.

The whole family assembles for lunch, including the tortoise, Everard, the second of his line, who is tethered by a long string and pegged down. His predecessor was slain by the Newfoundland dog, who was filled with a passionate scientific curiosity. He wanted to know how the creature worked, and what became of its head and legs, and he was always turning it over on its back. One day it disappeared, and was found some weeks later on its back, dead, with head and legs hanging limp! It was to avert any such tragedy with the present tortoise, who arouses just the same sentiments in Luath, that the long string was invented. The cat plays with the string, and Luath follows the tortoise round the garden, barking in protest when it walks too far. It lives in the sunk garden, and is visited night and morning by the dogs—a silent, solitary existence, but I like to think it is happy, and certainly it is energetic enough.

Seen from the back the tortoise is like an old woman in a poke-bonnet and a jet-beaded cape; one of those old ladies who have long since ceased to be women to become bundles of clothes.

Along the top of the garden grow a line of roses, on chains and pillars—Crimson Ramblers,



LUATH LOVES TO DRINK AT THE BIRD BATH

The Orchard

Dorothy Perkins, Lady Gay, Carmine Pillar and Rubens—a glorious splash of colour against the green and grey and purple haze of the woods. A peep of them can always be seen from the table in the orchard. Under the fruit trees in the spring there is always colour and blossom. Crocuses begin the dance, and when they are weary it is taken up by anemones, muscari, daffodils and narcissi, and cottage tulips of every colour possible. These are planted in masses; one or two trees have only the deep blue muscari and blue anemones, and they are almost the most satisfying. Later on in May, a brave troop of Darwin tulips marches down by the rose hedge and the privet hedge to the shrine of the Madonna of the orchard. It is the overture to the symphony, leading to the pastoral of the blossoms. Nothing is needed but young lambs to skip under the trees. Failing lambs, we tried kittens, but their mother, the black kitchen cat, objected, and hauled them all back to her dark cupboard in the pantry; she is an ugly cat, but a most excellent parent, and she will trust no one, except Luath, who watched their birth, and when one of the kittens was lifted down from the bed, he picked it up and restored it to her. The tender chivalry of the act won her undying confidence, and when she requires a rest she leaves him in

The Happy Garden

charge. He is never happier than when he can procure a situation as a temporary nurse.

When the blossoms arrive, there is often a gap between spring and summer, until one day we wake up to discover that the painter of the sunrise has dropped red splashes here and there in the garden, and when we look closer we discover that they are roses. . . . Out come the hammocks, wide-brimmed hats are unearthed, cricket-bats are oiled, mosquitoes come up from the cellar:—it is summer. The young herons chatter through the night, and it seems years since we saw the father of all the herons flying over to the post office to send telegrams conveying the glad announcement.

The busy artist paints sunrise after sunrise, sunset after sunset for the great picture which will never be finished, and drops more and more red paint into the garden. Bits of the sky and the sun fall down and the gardener and the gardener's boy, and I, hang them up in their places. Sad winter thoughts of workaday are rolled up and put away in drawers, and all the jolly thoughts of the last summer are taken out and polished up and set to gather sunbeams and store them up against the long nights, and one is kept to light the Christmas fire, for Yule logs can only be kindled by a summer sunbeam.

The Orchard

The birds have reared their families successfully, and they no longer sing of love, but rather of pride in their achievement. They sing the song of domestic happiness, and they, too, pretend that it will last for ever, though in their heart of hearts they know that, when the sun begins to be dragged lower and lower in the sky, a restless fever will overtake them, and they will hear the call of the south, and only one word will be in their minds and hearts :

“ *Go.* ”

And so they go and forget all the romance of spring, and all the summer's joy and pride, and next year it will again be more wonderful than ever before. It will again be like the first-coming of love, and He will say to Her : “ This time I know. This is the love of my life.”

All the same, I wish the birds would not eat my cherries. They have ninety-nine hundredths of each year's crop, and leave me the rest. The impudence of them is beyond words : blackbirds, thrushes, and, above all, jays. They laugh at scarecrows, and a gun is a joke to them. You may stand under the tree and clap your hands and they will not budge. Whether it is that they think : “ First come, first served ” is good enough morality for man and beast, or whether they have

The Happy Garden

an impish delight in thieving, I do not know. The trouble is that they like them just a little unripe, while I must have them in perfect condition. . . . In such a situation, there is nothing to be done. The trees might be netted, but that were cruel to the trees, forcing them to take the veil, and to such nunnishness I could never be a party.

It is hardly at all better with the apples and pears. Hardly are they ripe than the birds peck at them with their beaks, but then they are not so voracious, and if they are allowed to glut themselves with the cherries they are not in a condition to tackle all the larger fruit.

There is a superstition that if the birds are given water they will not touch fruit. It is nonsense. The birds here have the bird-bath in the courtyard, the vase on the lawn, the dog's drinking bowl, the pond and the rivers, and several rain tanks, and they are not a bit more honest for it; and they refuse to eat the insects and grubs and caterpillars which give them a magnificent opportunity of justifying their existence.

It is not altogether affectation to have the boles of the trees dressed in white. The first thought was for effect: but the lime-wash certainly keeps down many pests, and helps to destroy the

The Orchard

dreadful beasts that escape the winter washing of Bordeaux mixture.

The orchard is a troublesome family : a constant anxiety. Those who argue from tree to man and declare that a tree conducts and controls its life more wisely than a man, are more amusing than exact. Trees accept every sort of plague without protest, from sheer dull inability to put up a fight against the injustice of Nature. They are born—like men, in the most impossible places, but unlike men they make no effort to get away : they stay and grow up dwarfed and stunted and mis-shapen. And if they are given every advantage of soil and situation, they exhaust themselves in putting out a very tangle of shoots, and think that growth for the sake of growing is what is asked of them : rather like men who talk of Art for Art's sake :—and artists often stand in need of pruning, while other men, like luckless trees, grow stunted and mis-shapen and dwarfed. . . . No : perhaps there is not much to choose between trees and men, but what advantage there is most certainly does not lie on the side of the trees : at least, to judge from the behaviour of my orchard.

There are anxious moments in May and June lest frost should come and nip the setting fruit. When the moon is crescent there is always fear,

The Happy Garden

and with what gladness does one say : “ The moon is full to-night.”

Danger is almost past then, and anxiety can shift from the orchard to some other part of the garden. It is all anxiety passing swiftly to pride and pleasure, with the march of summer through all the lurking perils of the early year.

The orchard is the pivot of the whole design of the garden. At one side, cut off by a hedge of Rugosa roses, is the fruit garden, and on the other, running out of it, are lawns and flower beds. On one side is land tilled for the profit of the body, on the other, all is for the nurture of the spirit, through the senses. So all the appetites can be fed, and, lying in a hammock under the apple trees, one may turn to the east and think greedily of strawberries and raspberries, and asparagus, and artichokes, and peas ; or, wearying of that, one may turn to the west, and feast on colour, and the song of birds, and watch the moving shadows and the sun dappling the lawn under the trees. Then, all being well, and the mind being free, one may weave dreams and fantasies, peep through the woods and pretend to see fauns and nymphs, or the spirit of the men of ancient days hovering about the hills on which they camped and fought. Probably there will be old women and children

The Orchard

gathering sticks half-way up the hill, or a tramp will go slouching by, or, if you have any luck, you may see a lovely lady riding through the trees on a white horse attended by a handsome cavalier. The cavalier is probably the lady's groom : or her grandfather : but no matter : all who pass seem to move from nowhere into nothing, or from the pages of "Grimm's Fairy Tales" into the covers of Perrault, or gentle Madame d'Aulnoy. . . . One thing is certain : you will not be bored. That in any orchard is impossible : in my orchard it were a crime, a crime so horrible as to make the leaves of the trees stand on end and set the birds moulting out of season.

It were hard to tell whether the orchard is more beautiful in spring or autumn. When the blossoms come, eyes tuned to winter dullness drink their beauty ecstatically, and it is almost well that their life is short and they are soon scattered : but there is rich comfort in watching the ripening ruddy fruit, and, though it is almost the last glory of the pageant of the seasons, all that has gone before has so ripened appreciation that perhaps the greatest joy of all is the joy of harvest : it is the fulfilment of promise, a reality more beautiful than the dream : fulfilment ; contentment, peace.—And the tinge of melancholy in the autumn gives a new

The Happy Garden

zest to the pleasure of the orchard, just as the eager nip in the air quickens the senses and sets the blood racing and the mind scheming of new activities and fresh triumphs in the coming year.

Full summer is high holiday. Then nothing can be taken seriously : not even love : not even Jane. The earth throws back the heat of the sun. The air above the ground quivers. Heavy clouds come lumbering. In the curious light colour is deadened, and form rules. The shapes of all things take sharp lines. The dogs lie panting with their tongues out. We call for cool drinks. . . . Presently great drops fall. The parched earth seems to heave and swell, to open up her veins for the cool draught that will never be enough to slake her thirst. . . . It is too hot to walk, too hot to talk, to laugh, to think, almost too hot to breathe. . . . The rain comes. The toads come out, and we go in : for a few minutes only.

Then there is a blessed coolness and relief, and already the brown patches in the lawn are green again. It is good to live in England, where we can have flowers all the year round, and there are four seasons merging imperceptibly into each other, and through the year the country is green and rich and restful. It would be unbearable to have a garden killed by the sun^r in June, to have only winter^r and

The Orchard

summer, to have, as it were, the rise of the Roman Empire, and then its Decline and Fall. My Empire grows at the bidding of a gentler Nature, and, when all is done, there are winter joys, winter undefiled by mud : an empty garden, leafless trees, a field for a new campaign, a scene for new triumphs and defeats.

Through the winter the garden gives us food. Apples are stored, and in the autumn there is a tremendous brew of jams and jellies : crab-apple, blackberry, rowanberry, and even the hips and haws of the Japanese rose hedge are pressed into the service.

The path from the fruit garden enters the orchard between the privet and the rose hedges. On either side of it are sweet peas eight feet high. From early June—for the seed is sown in the autumn—right into September, they give me flowers of every colour and shade. Mauves shading to white on the one side and scarlet to the palest pink on the other. Sweet peas are the most generous of plants, and the more one takes the more they give. They have such an enthusiasm for propagation that they will put forth flower after flower in the hope that something will be allowed to come of it.

Before they arrive on the scene, the long path

The Happy Garden

is gay with wine-coloured wallflowers and forget-me-nots, and in the autumn, when they are almost past, pink and purple asters, spurred on by the beauty that has gone before them, make new glory to wipe out the memory of the old.

Behind the sweet peas are the strawberry beds, and the currants, black, red, and white, and gooseberries and raspberries, all caged in from the birds. It is not good to have them altogether enclosed, for the birds cannot devour the harmful insects, and therefore, at intervals, there are gaps in the wire roofs, which are covered with netting when the fruit is ripening. The cage is over six feet high, so that any ordinary person can walk freely and gorge strawberries in comfort.

For Jane's benefit the strawberry season shall be turned on, and she shall be left to feast, while I recall how Hookie, still a baby, before the robustious boy began to grow in him, sat in an apple tree in full blossom, half fearful, and half proud, and clapped his hands and delivered himself of his first poem :

*"Over my shory shoulder
The parrots and bullfinches fly:—*

a fragment which another infant completed :

*The bullfinches are the bolder,
The parrots are strangely shy."*

The Orchard

And when he descended from his perch, where he seemed to have lighted like an angel, the sheep-dog hurried him away for a game which ended disastrously, for presently Hookie came weeping and declaring vengefully, as he held out a podgy little hand :

“He’s laid his teeth on me.”

Dear Hookie ! Later in the day we tried to comfort him by reading “The Back of the North Wind,” as he sat up in bed. He thought over it, turned the flavour of it round his tongue and pronounced judgment :

“There’s too much bosom in that book.”

Our choice was bad. He was too young for sentimentality.

The sight of Hookie in the apple tree is an enduring memory, and now often, in the early morning and the twilight, dream-babies descend from the pines and light in the fruit trees, which there and then, whatever the season, burst into blossom.

A LONG WAY ROUND



I pity the man who
can travel from Dan
to Beersheba &
cry 'tis all barren,
& so it is: & so is
all the world to
him who will not
cultivate the fruits
it offers. "

A Sentimental Journey.

V

A Long Way Round

ONE chief aim in the garden is to make your plot of land seem larger than it is. Therefore, when you have laid out your ground so as to deceive yourself and everybody else, except those who pass over it in a balloon, you can considerably heighten your triumph by conducting your visitors by a zig-zag path. Decide on a given point, and go there as indirectly as possible. There is so much for your visitor to see by the way that he (or she) will never perceive the trick and will go away dreaming of a vast estate. . . . The Japanese have a dodge of reducing everything to scale so that, to pass from the fish-pond to the tea-house, you have to circumvent a mountain, traverse a perilous gorge and thread through a forest, while, in your sober senses, you are perfectly aware that it is really no more than one stride. A Japanese garden is a cut-and-dried symbol which, no doubt, saves trouble, but it must curtail the scope of invention and originality, and even sometimes forbid the use of the material

The Happy Garden

nearest to hand. I am sure it is not right to symbolise Buddhism in an English countryside, and, in my own case, the proximity of the pines would make it absurd to have a miniature Fuji-Yama, or even a small Snowdon in the carefully contrived distance. Those who demand mountains for their Paradise must see them in the sky, which often obliges with whole ranges, dotted here and there with castles, and great cliffs and many mansions.

Short of mountains, I can produce almost everything to order. There is no extended view from any corner of the garden, for it is all enclosed by a wall of pines, a mile or two thick, but three minutes' walk up the hill behind the house shows a view of lakes and hills, including the highest point between the Thames and the south coast. Five minutes on shows a wider view of heath and moor. Then, if you cavil at my own particular river, in half an hour's walk I can show you three rivers of divers dimensions, a tract of rich meadowland, more hills, a lake, between twenty and thirty herons, a ruined abbey, and, if you are weary of the pines, a wood of beech and oak, under which in turn grow snowdrops, primroses, daffodils, bluebells, and foxgloves, and a willow copse which is said to be a perfect place for nightingales, though

A Long Way Round

no nightingale has ever been known to agree with that opinion. . . .

I seem to have left Jane caged up in the fruit garden. She will never be able to look a strawberry in the face again, like those unfortunate rich people in London who are sick of strawberries by March, because by a curious inversion they cannot afford to eat anything in season. To have too much money is a great deal worse than having too little, and when you reach the point of finding ordinary food too cheap for your income, then it is time to take desperate measures.

Jane, in her youth, was poor, but not too poor. In middle life she was rich, but not too rich, and she has never had any real anxiety, or real trouble. She has never quarrelled with anyone. She is patriotic when other people are patriotic, despondent when other people are despondent, not from sympathy, but from sentiment, and because it makes things comfortable to be so. She hates nothing, and she loves nothing. She would admire a villa garden with a Derbyshire spar rockery and oyster-shell edging to the beds of scarlet geranium and blue lobelia as much (and as little) as in her heart of hearts she admires all that I am so proud to display.

Why worry about her?

The Happy Garden

Because she is just a good, kind, ordinary little soul, and ordinary people are such a blessing, and such a comfort. She is shrewd and knows honesty when she sees it, and if she has never touched any great height in her life, neither has she reached any great depth. She has pursued an even middle course, and gathered a sort of wisdom by the way, and some sweet memories. She shed a tear at the end of the third chapter. . . . In her inmost soul she will admit that there is more in life than she has got out of it, and she will honour those who have dared where she has had neither opportunity nor temptation. Your Pharisees are those who have failed to meet the demands made of them.

By this excursion into morality the back premises are reached which lie over against the fruit garden. . . . Washhouse and wood-shed first: remarkable chiefly for the William Allen rose that grows up the front and over the black roof most of the summer. Dotted about are frames where cucumbers and tomatoes grow, and beyond them again a pergola of gourds which are used for house decoration in the winter. Down by the tool-house and apple-room, which were once the gardener's cottage, are the glass-houses which gave the place its finishing touch as a gentleman's residence. A vine grows in one of them, where the

A Long Way Round

agapanthus lilies are stored during the winter : in the summer they stand on the lawn and the court-yards, and delight the gardener by filling his rivals with envy. Always there are complicated seeding processes toward, a mixture of routine and daring experiment. Giant pots of pink geraniums, trained round sticks, which stand on the courtyard in summer, tubs of hydrangeas, early Canterbury bells, and lilies, are carefully nursed in what is called "a cold house" against the ravages of winter frosts.

More fruit trees, Jane, but that is a Morella cherry by the garage, and the fruit is for cooking.

Jane has found something that her English heart can really love. A broad gravel drive flanked on either side by lupin and cranesbill and every kind of cottage flower. On the left is the kitchen garden, and on the right is the front view of the gardener's cottage : a little green door and a window on either side, neat, trim and serviceable, as plain and honest as his cabbages. On a line by the door are aprons and baby-clothes hung out to air, and Jane greets them with a great sigh of relief. It seems that she was Britishly weary of beautiful things and hungering for utility. She was worried by the absence of any kind of cooking or washing or housekeeping, and disliked the

The Happy Garden

thought of life being so organised that all the machinery of it was hidden.

"Bother your flowers," she seemed to say, though she could never put it so vigorously, "let me see your grocer's bills."

And so she shall—between chapters.

Master Gardener is in his perambulator on the courtyard, kicking, and crowing, and glad that he can see a little more to-day than he could yesterday, and certain that he will see a great deal more to-morrow. It must be a fine time of life when the world unfolds itself in daily miracles, when to-day appears a great tree where none was yesterday, and out of the darkness emerge shapes ever more and more wonderful, faces kind and terrifying, colours and lights more and more dazzling and brilliant. . . . But Jane has no philosophy. To her a baby is a baby and she must hug it.

She does so.

She says, "Ooza-popsy-wops . . ." and Master Gardener roars lustily. His mother comes at a run, glares at Jane, snatches her precious son from her uncomfortable arms; at once his mouth closes, his eyes open and his face is wreathed in the fattest of smiles.

Perhaps Jane would be better for a little philosophy.

A Long Way Round

A peep into the doll's house will be suffered by Master Gardener. He has not yet begun to resent intrusion or to regard the cottage as exclusively *his* house. Later on though, he will reach human egoism and the doll's house will be written all over :

“The house where I live.”

He will be a gardener like his father—(indeed, as soon as he can crawl, he is to be set a-weeding)—and gardeners grow out of that sort of thing sooner than most of us.

Jane peeps into the tiny kitchen, and I tell her how the gardener made the house ready against the coming of his bride, working through the night, painting, and papering, and whistling like a thrush : and how she came and was like a little white dove, so soft and pretty ; and how Master Gardener shouldered his way into the world with a lusty yell, and put us all in our places by the mere fact of his arrival, and how the Newfoundland had received an intimation that he had set out on his journey and made inquiries every day for a week and barked a welcome when at last he descended upon us out of the night.

And simple Jane declares that she has found the perfect place on earth and will never, never stir. She actually sits down and puts the most embarrassing questions to Mrs. Gardener—(Jane

The Happy Garden

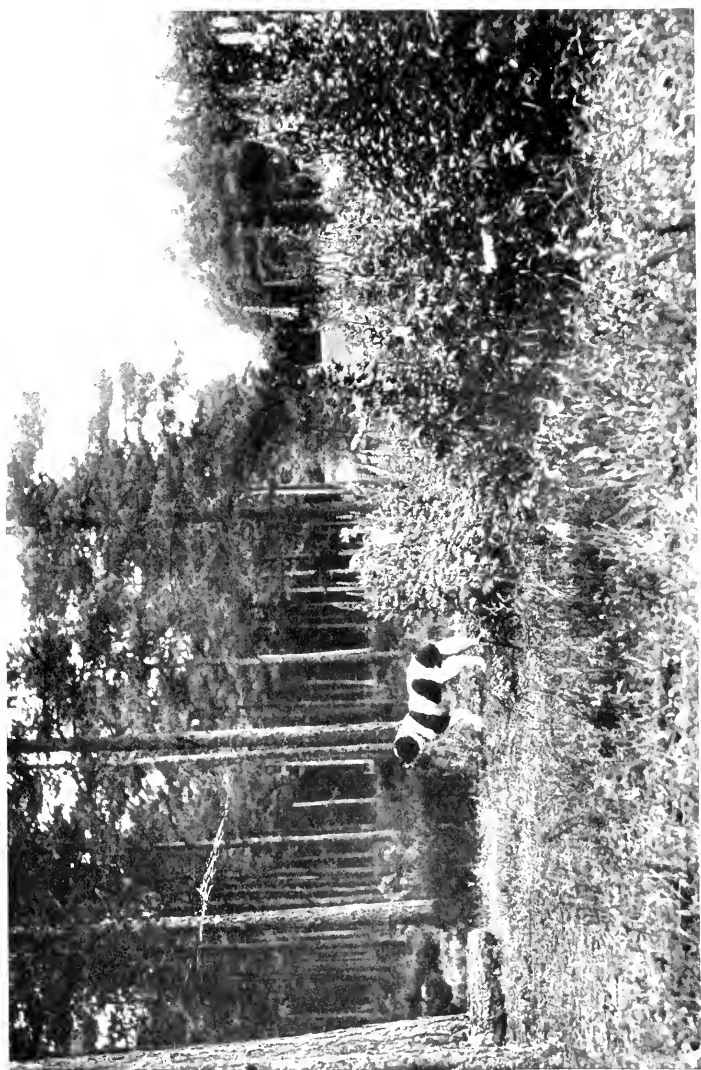
was once a district visitor and has never recovered) —and shows such a firm determination to take up her quarters there that at last Mrs. Gardener has to say that things are rather crowded as they are, though she would be only too delighted to have Mrs. Smith as a paying guest, were it not that all the available space is needed for a future Miss Gardener.

She blushes so prettily as she says it, and is so shy and timid that I laugh outright and take my offending Jane away, and leave after Master Gardener has given my hand one last suck. Bless him!

With Jane away, I feel safer and relieved, though, having invented Jane for a certain purpose, I am bound to it: and having invented a sort of Early Victorian Jane, who is all conscience, my conscience becomes active too. Jane has claims upon me and must be satisfied; but she shall go the very longest way round, and I refuse to spare her.

She has seen the kennel, but I think she did not see the water-butt, and I am sure she did not sufficiently admire the thick hedge of fir and spruce cut to half the height of the trees.

It is hardly necessary for her to see the garden rollers or the shed where the games live; almost



"The pines go marching up the hill that was once a Roman camp"

A Long Way Round

enough to start a small store. However, she may see the other side of the privet hedge, since people of her period seem so rarely to have seen the other side of things.

There now, Jane : Where are you ?

She rubs her eyes, and is amazed to find herself at the orchard end of the sweet-pea path : the point from which she set out.

She likes things large, and the zig-zag treatment is beginning to have its effect. She remembers miles of strawberry beds, acres of cabbages, a carriage drive a quarter of a mile long, and like the American, caught tripping on the verge of a wild exaggeration, a conservatory one mile high—and six feet wide.

She shall approach the rest—and best—of the garden through the woods. Therefore, up the path on the other side of the Japanese rose hedge, past Hookie's apple tree, along the little path through the border and into the woods.

The smell of the pines !

In spite of herself, Jane is impressed. The pines go marching up the hill that was once a Roman camp, and later the monks' rabbit warren, and for a little way we follow them, up to the lane where we saw the good people from Grimm and Perrault and Madame d'Aulnoy.

The Happy Garden

There we turn : and with the pines swinging above us, and the sun mottling their stems, and all about us a haze of purple and gold, we gaze down into the garden gleaming like a jewel of emeralds and sapphires, with here and there a ruby in its dark setting.

“ A blue garden,” says Jane.

It is not really blue, but it has that effect which comes from the rigorous application of an elemental law which forbids a crude yellow.

Yellow is taboo.

It is an arrogant, upstart, vulgar colour, which will not admit the right of any other to exist. It is a tyrant, and in my garden meets the fate of all tyrants. It is rooted out : and so, to my thinking, it should be in all gardens.

A passion for laurels is often accompanied by a taste for sunflowers, and when the garden and I were first acquainted, it was delivered over to the dominion of every size and shape of sunflower. It did not so much matter then, as there was no attempt at colour or form, and the three acres were almost all stubble and cabbage beds. Sunflowers grew everywhere, and, like everything else, seeded themselves with indecent haste and persistency. . . . For years they tormented. Like Frederick the Great, I waged a Seven Years' War,



NEARLY ALL THE FLOWERS BY THIS WALK ARE BLUE AGAINST THE DARK PINES

A Long Way Round

and even now I am not sure that victory is mine. I have nightmares of my borders of blue and mauve and pink being invaded by this Yellow Peril. My state is much like that of the Australians and the Americans of the Pacific coast. In moments of depression I see yellow everywhere.

Of course, I except daffodils, but even so, I am reluctant to admit the heavy double blooms that have too rich a colour. Between them and the pale jonquil or the light trumpet of the wild daffodil there is the difference between fresh country butter and the town conglomerate. . . . Pale yellow is admissible even in full summer. Tall handsome mullein is warmly greeted. For all his stature and the beauty of his figure, mullein is modest and strikes no yellower note than the lemon tint in the after-glow of a dull sunset. His complexion sorts well with the greeny-yellow of the autumn lawn; and, grown amongst the pines in the woods, he looks his very best. Yellow broom and yellow gorse can offend no one—in their place. They are stippled yellow splashes from the paint-pot, and must be set against a dark background. So also with the laburnum, which, if it be hung against the sky, loses half the beauty of its form. Laburnum should always be hung out against a pine wood, or if pine woods are not

The Happy Garden

available, a dark bank, or a mass of trees as dark as possible, and, if wistaria can be got to cling about and droop its pale mauve tresses through the yellow, so much the better.

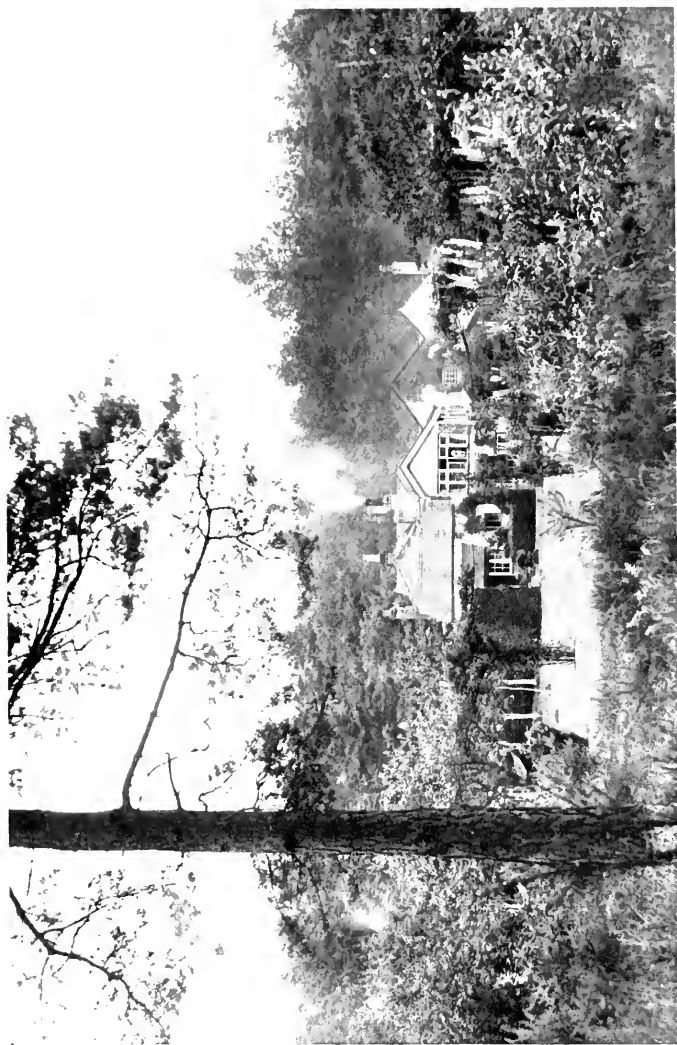
In my garden yellow laburnum hangs out into the road like a banner, and to ignorant eyes seems to mock my stern denunciation of yellow.

Primroses, of course, no one could or would denounce. There is a carpet of them when snow-drops pass under the birch avenue.

But that there may be no misunderstanding, let me say at once, that pale yellow and deep orange have no offence in them, and, therefore, I have pale asphodeline lutea with its pretty light grey foliage and handsome pods: yellow monkshood, creamy iris, yellow roses, alstrœmerias and other orange lilies, tree lupins and columbine.

I think that list exhausts the yellow flowers that are bearable. Many of them are things of joy, and are on the best of terms with all the other flowers.

From here, Jane, you have the best view of the house, because the most fairy-like and full of enchantment. You see the whole length of it and the odd shape that it has come by in its growth: all corners and gables and angles; the offices reaching out towards the west, and the house proper towards the south. All right-minded houses, like



"Here you have the best view of the house . . . all corners, and gables, and angles "

A Long Way Round

healthy fruit (and people), turn their faces sunward to the south. And the creepers embrace it and bring it naturally into the garden. House and garden should be one. They should give and take and strive always to be worthy of each other.

“Like marriage,” sighs Jane.

Exactly. And, as in marriage, there is neutral ground—the courtyards—where they can deposit their differences of upbringing and prejudice, and properly admire each other’s qualities and make due allowance for each other’s failings.

“Ah!” sighs Jane.

“Has John no qualities?” say I, thinking, of course, that Jane is off upon her own married life.

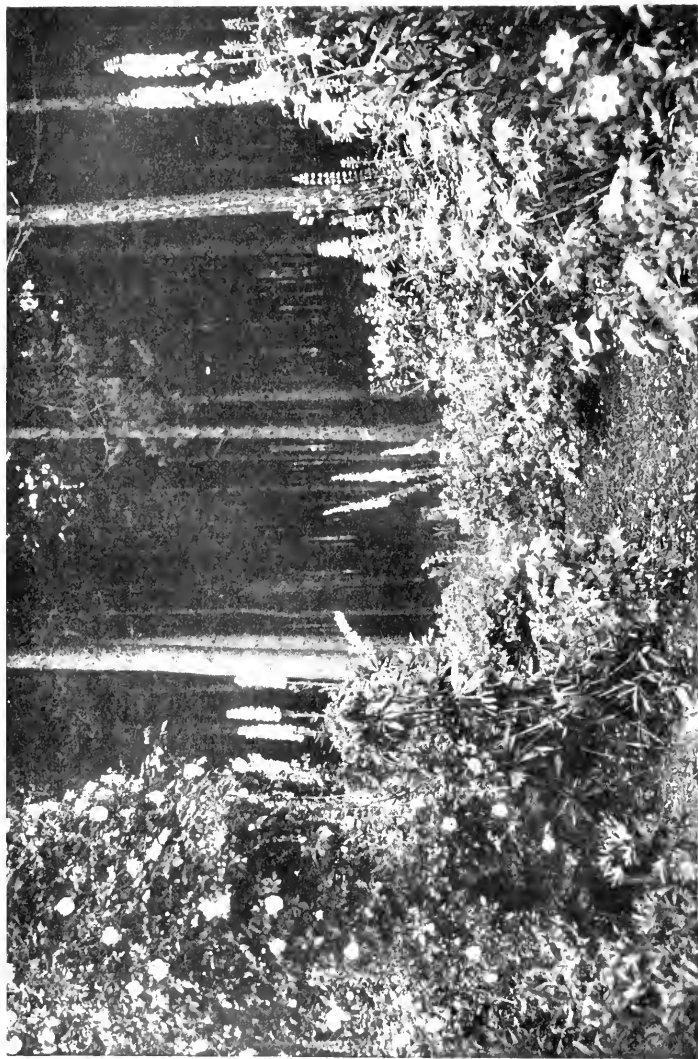
“Much worse!” she says. “He thinks he has no failings.”

It is time to lead Jane on. People always become so sentimental in the woods.

She shall come down to the old gate which is a bower of carmine pillar and Montana clematis and guelder-rose, while, hard by, a tall silver birch stands sentinel. Lavender grows by the gate, and honesty, megasea and iris on the other side, where the great border of delphiniums reaches back into the wood. This border has grown wider and wider, and at last became so unget-at-able and unmanageable, that I was compelled to make paths through

The Happy Garden

it. One wide grass path runs through the centre of it, leaving on either side a border of about twenty yards long and fifteen deep. Through each of these a narrow crooked path leads you between tall lilies and white foxgloves, and anchusa, and, best of all, delphiniums of every shade of blue into the woods. In the early summer, giant scarlet poppies make a brilliant show against the deep colour of the pines. At sunset this border is at its best, the gentian blue of the anchusa becoming a thousand times more vivid as the sun catches it before finally dropping behind the hills. The smaller portion of the border, on the left side of the wide grass path, that runs up to meet the carpet of peat and pine needles and moss, is mostly given up to red and orange flowers; and sweet bergamot and alstroemerias, lychnis, geums, chelone barbata, gaillardia, gladiolus, brenchleyensis, with the grey foliage of funkia, and the double white arabis and white pinks, make a brave show in July. . . . I keep these wide borders for all the very hardy plants, as it is almost impossible to give them individual attention. Phloxes are heavily mulched early in the summer, and left to take care of themselves, and they are not often far behind those planted in the borders on the lawn, which are watered and cosseted as though they were delicate children. This



"A narrow crooked path . . . between tall lilies, white foxgloves, and anachars, and, best of all, delphiniums of every shade of blue."

A Long Way Round

same scheme of colour is carried out on the right-hand side of the grass path, but with the addition of pale yellow mullein and thalictrum, and orange lilies escort you along the little path that joins this and the main portion of the border, in which are repeated the blues of the delphiniums, in very large masses, the mauve of the cranesbill, the white and pink of the phloxes, the fine foliage of the grey artichoke, with pinks and violas, polygonum, iberis, and other dwarf flowers tumbling over one another on to the path.

The whole scheme is designed to be an introduction to the comer through the woods, and an invitation when seen from the house through the framework of the chain of rambler roses. It is a half-way house between Art and Nature, the rich beautiful Nature who is seen at work in the valley from the top of the hill.

And there, after a breathing space, I shall take Jane on the way to the annual borders which are stretched in a curve at the bottom of the slope of the lawn ten yards away from the stone courtyard.

OVER the HILLS & FAR AWAY



"The time has come.....
to talk of many things."

VI

Over the Hills and Far Away

NOTHING is so difficult as to do exactly what one meant to do : bad so often becomes worse, but good less frequently becomes better.

The point of the remark is that Jane has turned out so different from what she was intended to be, that an ordinary digression is not enough for her. She has brought her matrimonial difficulties into this affair, and it looks as though we should have to go from the top border to the sunk garden by way of John o' Groats if she is to be shaken clear of them. . . . John Smith plays the game, and gives the impression that his first thought is for Jane, when he says :

“ Ah—if only Jane were here ! ”

But Jane has not been here more than a few days before she begins to give John away. On the whole, I am not sure that John's “ game ” is not really more treacherous than Jane's indiscretion, though I would not say so for the world. Men are so proud of their rules of conduct, as they have

The Happy Garden

every right to be, for they work out very well in theory.

The dogs have guessed that we are thinking of a walk, and are protesting vigorously at our delay. Between Jane and John they have no thought of judging.

This way: round through the trees to the southern gate in the wire fence, which marks the bounds of the estate and serves to keep the rabbits out, and the dogs and other animals in.

Who says that dogs do not understand words? Their vocabulary, like our own, is limited to their needs. When I say: "Water!" they know perfectly well that we shall keep straight on at the foot of the hills, until the time comes to turn to the left and cross the road down to the river, where they bathe.

"Collars off!" has a clear and definite meaning to their minds, and they will stand still to be undressed.

The river is about half a mile from the garden, and the dogs walk and run many times that distance. . . . They are off on the scent of rabbits, hares, pheasants, and squirrels, but they very rarely catch anything. Once Luath caught a sitting pheasant—I hardly dare tell the story—carried it half a mile, and buried it hard down in the soft

Over the Hills and Far Away

peat. It was rescued a quarter of an hour later, none the worse, save for the loss of a few feathers.

A dog's instinct seems to drive him to burial rather than to out and out murder, and perhaps our animals are too civilised to make a clean job of it, for they are never wholly successful. Their victims always escape, and upon the only occasion when the sheepdog, Billy, succeeded in frightening a rabbit into "shamming dead"—it was really hypnotised by fear—his instinct so failed him that he had to wait for instructions from Luath, who buried it for him.

For half a mile we go along the ride through the woods until we reach the clearing known as "the Heather Glen," a wide gap between two walls of trees. In the summer it is like a purple river, while through the rest of the year, it is brown and green-blue in the distance—and at the bottom is a path of silver sand that looks like a glittering stream. On either side of the glen the dark pines are fringed with silver birches—the lady among trees, as the beech is the gentleman. Lovely mosses grow among the heather, and in the autumn bright-coloured toadstools which I gather from day to day for my winter table garden:—a garden in miniature which is laid out in a dish. Moss and peat furnish the soil, and it can be made gay with

The Happy Garden

anything that comes to hand, natural or faked. The chief thing is to have very little in it. Two or three snowdrops growing by a baby fern on one side, whilst a piece of a branch of a pine tree covered with grey lichen may spread itself across the other, with a gay toadstool—if in season—a tiny imitation one, if not—completes it. But when one begins to make a table garden, it is wonderful what varieties of things can be found to furnish it.

They are melancholy toys, these winter gardens, but, when heavy work is toward—and the rectification of the mistakes of one year before the coming of the next is very heavy work—it is well to have something to play with. It is parlour gardening ; much as, in the absence of war, soldiers are set down to a board with pawns to play the war-game. There are people who declare that gardening is not serious, but those are disappointed souls who will have it that all art is “fair but futile.” And so, I would retort, it is for them, but that I know the danger of limiting art, and the arrogance that believes that only the elect may enjoy and profit by it. Indeed, I cannot and dare not believe that there is any creature finally and hopelessly impervious to art and Nature.

That is a confession of faith which must be irritating to the utilitarian who is seeking for the

Over the Hills and Far Away

practical happiness of the garden, and, to jump back to the objectiveness of the utilitarian, let me say that the little winter garden is invaluable as a table decoration. Not only does it feed the eye but it furnishes a topic of conversation and saves much uneasiness. For the country-hungry Londoner it is precious, keeping memory alive, and furnishing excuses for escape at the week-end, for it needs replenishing from week to week, and the where-withal cannot easily be purchased in the shops. . . .

The gossamers ! Sometimes they can be seen where the glint of the low sun catches their threads, but the marvel is when, in early spring and late autumn, the morning mists and dews turn them to sheets of glass and mirrors and bridal veils and gauzy webs, spun thick over the heather, and strings of glittering beads flung from tree to tree. Often the spruces are clad in a soft grey veil. It is as though the little people of the woods had gone away and left their furniture in their winding sheets.

Foolishly, perhaps, one endows the wood-people with human habits and desires. Not guessing the purposes of the fairy rings, we vow that they must dance in them, and when a toadstool thrusts itself up through the peat and stands with a thatched roof of pine-needles, that we call a fairy house : though, if there *are* wood-people, it were more

The Happy Garden

reasonable to believe that earth and sky are house enough for them. It is hard to relinquish fantasy, hard not to see everything in one's own imperfect human image, and when, on the slope of the hill, I find rows of little mossy cushions, like green buttons, I decide that there has been a Parliament, or an Eisteddfod, or a Revivalist meeting, flinging to the winds the suggestion of reason that things natural have no affairs to discuss, no formal songs to sing, no sins to repent of, and no prayers to say. It is self-flattery perhaps: but more likely the inventions of Puck and Oberon, and Titania, with their very ordinary domestic jealousy, serve only the more easily to express the poet's sense of kinship with the trees and all the living things harboured in their shade. The remembrance of it is comforting food for the natural man or woman who has to bear the burden of the artificial person who rubs along through the surface duties of society.

And this is very irritating to Elisabeth, that utilitarian person who, a moment or two ago, demanded the practical service of the winter dish-garden. She has stepped off the paper and taken her place by Jane's side. She has a determined look in her eyes and a faint line about the right corner of her mouth which I do not like, and I hear her saying to Jane:

Over the Hills and Far Away

“Don’t you believe a word of it. It’s no good. There’s no money in it. Higher education’s the thing.”

She is the unwomanly woman, who crops up, as here, in such unexpected places : a Newnhamite, a Fabian, a lady-actuary : she looks for tendencies rather than deeds, even in herself : with the appalling result that she invariably judges and condemns the deeds of others. To her the cult of gardens is sentimental and old-fashioned, like Mozart’s music and the Florentine pictures : and she has those safely advanced professions which are never likely to be called into practice. She has a reputation, and her chief safeguard lies in hammering into Jane—who believes anything, if it is said often enough—that I and people like me who feed on the colour and charm and vividness of life, are out of date, which is much worse than being immoral.

I regard Elisabeth as dangerous to Jane : Elisabeth regards my influence on Jane as dangerous to herself : and, as for Jane—no one will ever know what she thinks of either of us.

There’s a queer little drama to have cropped up in a digression !

Having set out upon it, we must go the longest way round—we three and the dogs—and if Elisa-

The Happy Garden

beth is obstinate, I think I have a thing or two in the garden that will settle her.

This is the sort of thing that happens. I call upon Jane to admire one of the most royal of my beech-tree friends, a tree whom I am proud to know, with an immense bole spreading into six great trunks, reaching up to the heavens and covered over with a green mantle, like the tree of Jove.

Jane cranes her neck and marvels, and at once Elisabeth makes her shy and timid and afraid she is doing the wrong thing by snapping :

“ When it is made into chairs and tables, I’ll admire it.”

The retort did not come to me until much later. The gift of ready repartee so often seems to go with a seemingly hard self-possession which is foreign to me. What I should have said, and what I hasten to say now is this :

“ But till then, as a tree, it is beautiful, and its beauty is there to be enjoyed.”

However, I did not say it and went on, feeling that I was getting the worst of it, and beginning to hate the sight of Elisabeth’s Liberty blouse, and her stiff collar, and her tight hair, and her pince-nez that were always falling from her rather large nose to be fastened on again with much ferrety screw-

Over the Hills and Far Away

ing of her eyes and a nervous shrug of her sloping shoulders.

The beech tree stands at the entrance to the cool green glade which ends abruptly in a wall of oaks above a sandy bank that slopes steeply down to the river. Skirting the edge of the pine-woods, the river comes winding in a long curve flanked on either side by the willow copse and the slope of a flat fat meadow—the monk's pasture; for the ruined abbey is only half a mile away, and the monks of old invariably fastened on the richest land in their region.

There are cows grazing and they lift their heads in fear as they wind the dogs. They come lumbering towards us. They know themselves to be larger than the enemy and instinctively they hope to overawe by sheer bulk and show of courage. The dogs look to us. We are not afraid :—Jane puts a brave face on it and sighs with thankfulness that the stream is between us and them—and the day is gloriously hot, and the immediate business is swimming.

Elisabeth's contempt for humanity leaves her fairly reasonable, though rather viciously sentimental, about animals. She throws sticks for Billy, and I find Jane gazing at the blue hills and the flight of birds, and the little red house in the

The Happy Garden

distance, and there is sorrow in her eyes, sorrow because she finds more beauty in the scene than is comfortable to her, and she wants to share it and hardly dares: she just touches me with her hand, and with a fearful glance at Elisabeth, who is behaving like a rowdy undergraduate, she says in a whisper: "It is very pretty."

That wipes out Elisabeth's advantage. The digression is proving valuable. It is possible that before we are through with it, Jane will begin to peck her way out of her shell, and perhaps in the end the hungry little inward Jane starved by John's perpetual Game, will light up her heart and sing and—live. Perhaps for one tiny morsel of a second she will not be afraid of happiness.

Who knows?

But the Social Conscience, which is Elisabeth, must first be squashed.

There is so much to see, so much to enjoy, but Elisabeth hangs a curtain of books and figures, and what she calls "facts" between herself and the world. She is humane without being human, and almost hysterically resents the humanity in Jane. The light of the world is not to her the light of the sun, but the light of the brains of Messrs. Zola, Sidney Webb, Nietzsche, Bernard Shaw and Co. If it were the light of her own brain one could

Over the Hills and Far Away

sympathise with her and feel some pity : but her imprisonment and self-mutilation are wilful, and I have no patience with her.

How can she see my beech tree and talk of chairs ? How can she see the whitebeam and not clap her hands with joy, or the rhododendrons and the marshy flowers and not laugh with delight ? She scorns fantasy, and yet she is a thousand times more fantastic than any invention of the craziest writers.

She shall see everything, and in the end, I think, she will not so mightily despise Jane's simplicity.

Round the stems of the pine trees bracken grows thickly, a green undergrowth sometimes eight feet high. From the tops of the trees pigeons dart and hover through the dim light : a religious light, for here, where the trees are tallest, the woods are like a cathedral decked for festival, where even death is celebrated with brave colour, in the hope and certain knowledge of new birth.

The ground slopes gradually down to the lake where the herons dwell, mating and nesting in the tree-tops in the early months of the year. Sometimes we count as many as twenty of them standing on one leg and fishing in the reeds at the southern end of the lake, and every evening as the

The Happy Garden

sun goes down a heron flies over to the post-office—so we guess—to fetch and send off letters, or when the young birds are out of the egg, to despatch telegrams and newspaper announcements : boy or girl, as the case may be.

Clap your hands. They have a lovely flight with legs outstretched and head and neck curled back like the prow of a viking ship : wide wings held still and taut after the first few beats, as they swing up into the wind, hover and swoop.

Water-lilies grow, and in April there are sheets of the beautiful bog-bean with its orchid-like flower and cup-like leaves.

The lake is still, and in it you shall see the trees mirrored and the sky : the moonlit night and the stars : the flowering shrubs : the reeds. Out of the weeds come little flotillas of wild duck : frogs dive as you approach and the flies dance crazily. It is such a place of places, a place so seemingly forgotten, that it is absurd to think that the lake is only a stone's throw away from the house, for in all these peregrinations through the woods you are never more than a mile away from the house. Your furthest point, perhaps, is when you are at the other side of the lake and cannot cut through direct.

The most beautiful of all remains—it always

Over the Hills and Far Away

does. By the mossy path through masses of rhododendrons, and birch, and beech, and oak, and pine—pheasants rocketing and rabbits scurrying at every turn—you come to a gate leading to a water meadow, on the other side of which is a mighty range of chestnuts and ancient plane trees. The meadow is richly decked with kingcups and flowers of Parnassus, buttercups and daisies, and lords and ladies. It is only crossable in summer. . . . Let it be summer, and we will cross it, scale the iron fence, and find ourselves in the path under the chestnuts along the wide stretch of the river which flows by long windings to the Thames, and so to London, where, as Elisabeth would say, it becomes part and parcel of an economic entity, and an asset in the nation's wealth. Here it has a wealth of beauty beyond all price, as it moves sluggishly in its broad bed, rich with flowering reeds, and herbs, and flags, and tangled growth, while the great trees hang down their arms and dabble their green fingers in the water. Best and most beloved of all are the giant chestnuts, which together form a green-roofed house, cool and lofty, at the final bend before the Georgian house and the grey walls of the ruined abbey come into view. The great branches sweep down within two feet of the ground and the water, and there is a little

The Happy Garden

window through which a delicious peep of the river can be seen and often the brilliant flashing blue of the kingfisher and the sober navigation of the water fowl.

The chestnuts never will become chairs. They will never be swept into the commercial machine : like so many men, they are too old !

Still the most beautiful of all lies before us—the bluebell wood : a mossy bank rising from a little backwater that runs through the withy bed, up under giant beech and oak and pines. Even in January there are flowers here, snowdrops are spread in a sheet up and down and even over the path. These give way to daffodils, primroses, and celandine, then to blue bells :—

*“ I wonder if I'm awake.
Those trees never used to grow
Bathing their feet in a deep blue lake,
I can't make it out, you know.*

*I always thought of the sky
High lifted over my head :
So please can you tell me the reason why
It's under my feet instead ?*

*But the bellmen of Elfin Town
Ring out their delicate chime.
The world has not turned upside down,
It is only—Bluebell time.”*

And, as a last challenge to the marching seasons, foxgloves raise aloft their spears and defy the

Over the Hills and Far Away

summer—in vain. They pass too, and the great trees, secure in the entail of the estate on which they have been wise enough to grow, hardly notice all the wonders at their feet, for, by the time they have accomplished their year's task, it is spring again. Time is not the same for trees and snow-drops.

Here, if anywhere, there should be nightingales, but though the most exquisite nights are arranged for them and the largest of moons are ordered, they are not to be tempted—or I have not been fortunate enough to hear them. One cannot have everything and a nightingale is quite an easy thing to create in imagination.

Incidentally, I may add that these giant trees provide the finest leaf-mould for the garden, and every year we build a stack of it behind the glass-houses.

Now the word is "Home." Only half the treasures have been seen, but enough to give the flavour of the country-side, which is the setting of my garden. On the other side the pines stretch for a couple of miles over the hills and far away. A Black Forest, relieved only by green rides and glades and heather glens, where, in winter, the sun is trapped so that we can lie and bask on one slope while in the shade opposite the rime is still steaming from the heather.

The Happy Garden

Is the garden in keeping with the country ?
Is the art of it sufficiently in sympathetic contrast
with it ? Is it arranged with such skill as to
justify the purloining of the acres of wood ? All
things considered, is it so right as to seem inevitable ? . . . In fine, am I a fit and proper person to
live in such a country and impose my will on it ?

If not, perish the house and every flower in the
place. Let the pines resume their dominion, and
I will go and live with Jane in her Kentish suburb,
or, worse, with Elisabeth in her flat in the Adelphi.

It was not, though it might have been, my
pines that were in George Meredith's mind when
he wrote :

*“ A wind sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air,
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there,
The pine-tree drops its dead :
They are quiet as under the sea,
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase :
And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.*

He loved the pines, and used to envy me for
living among them, though Box Hill was beautiful

Over the Hills and Far Away

enough even for a poet. He came here once in a motor car, and sat out in the golden road while I went into the garden to tell my flowers that a real poet was on the other side of the hedge. He and the pines had a great conversation, and understood each other well; they belonged to the same generation and came into the world about the same time, and the pines could understand all that he had been and suffered, for often they, too, have had those who have no eyes to see in their midst, and always they have sung:

"Overhead, overhead!"

to deaf ears.

And he, as he wrote of Shakespeare:

*" . . . knew thee, Mother Earth: unsoured
He knew thy sons, He probed from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflowered
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips. . . .*

He was an old man when I knew him, and yet he was the youngest man I ever met. His laughter was a great shout of youth, his voice as free and swinging as the wind in the pines. It was the proudest moment of the garden's history when he came to gaze on it; and the pines often talk of it, and he has become a legend among the herons over by the lake, and more than once on my hill

The Happy Garden

I have heard the rhythm of the trees and the wind
and the clouds take shape in these words :

*“Our faith is ours and comes not on a tide ;
And whether Earth’s great offspring, by decree,
Must rot if they abjure rapacity,
Not argument but effort shall decide.”*

My garden is my Effort, and in the making of
it George Meredith has counted for much. He
was my friend.

ANNUALS.



"As a happy people
come.
When the war has
rolled away,
With dance & tabor,
pipe & drum,
And all make
holiday."

Sydney Dobell.

VII

Annuals

To the indolent or the prideless gardener annuals are a nuisance. When the tulips and the spring flowers are over there is a hurrying and a scurrying and a digging and a preparing of the soil for the many hardy and half-hardy annuals that are so useful for helping to keep the garden beautiful in July and August.

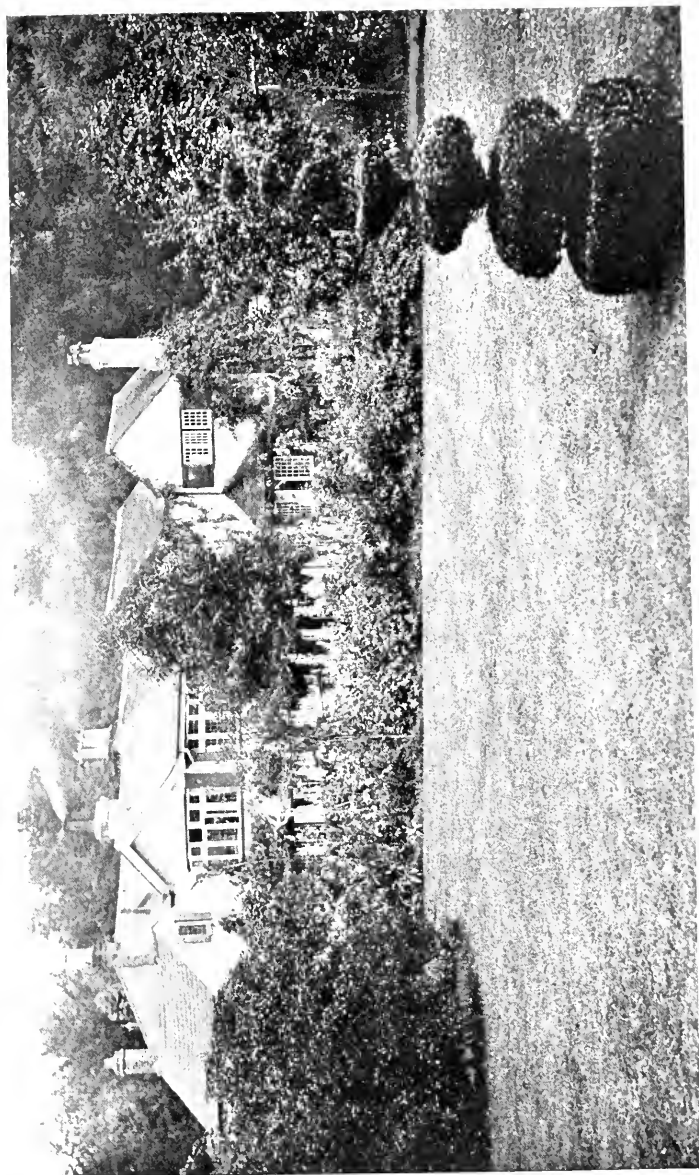
My plan, aiming, as always, at bold masses of colour, is to treat the annuals in much the same way as I treat perennials, and to group them in thick clusters. The ordinary dot-and-carry-one method is an irritation, and, I am sure, must be demoralising to the flowers.

Their parade ground is a wide double border with a grass path in between, lying near the house so that the way lies through them from the orchard to the peat garden—the two chief dwelling-places. Following the gentle slope of the lawn, the borders bend down to meet the herbaceous borders by the croquet lawn and the cherry walk.

The Happy Garden

Border I., that nearest the house, is divided by a low wall, made of loose stone, in which grow iris, double arabis, primulas, and all the spring flowers. Rosemary and lavender and the Scotch brier-rose group themselves at intervals, and it ends fantastically with a clipped cock, who, with a peacock, guards the entrance to the little sundial courtyard.

Beneath the wall is a narrow bed, where, in the spring, grow tulips and purple violas, which, if the dying blooms are picked, last far into the summer. When the tulips die and the annuals are clamouring to show themselves, being then but silly little spikes and tendrils protruding from their native earth, then the aforesaid hurrying and scurrying and digging takes place. Weeds grow apace and monopolise the boy's attention: Mr. Gardener is engrossed with his lawns and vegetables; all the tall-growing plants cry aloud for their crutches: and somewhere, somewhen, the annuals have to be looked to, and there is nobody to do it. Everybody accuses everybody else, tempers are lost, blight descends on the roses, cuckoo pint is everywhere, copper beetles descend from nowhere and devour the buds of the brier roses, the sky repents of its deluges in the early spring, and rains no more—and somehow the annuals have to be planted.



THE ANNUAL BORDER SEEN FROM THE EDGE OF THE WOOD

Annuals

It is the most wretched time of the year. Roses are out, summer has really come, but the annuals deny enjoyment of it all. And yet they are indispensable. No annuals, no August flowers, and the garden soon begins to look brown and dry. But the reward is all the sweeter for the worry and effort.

In my garden they are especially important, since they are so placed as to give the first impression from the house—and the impression to be aimed at is one of colour, brilliant, glowing, ablaze. Without the annuals there would be no intimacy in the double border. It would have to be more distant from the house.

As it is, to walk down the grass path is to feel something of the charm of the best cottage gardens. On either side at the back of the borders rises a blue wall of delphiniums, blue lupins, and some few phloxes, pink and white, and Michaelmas daisies, and a good many purple cranesbills.

A little low box-edging marks the border off from the lawn, setting a trim formal boundary to Nature's extravagance—Nature aided and abetted by myself. . . . Left to herself, Nature does not offend: but she has so little sympathy with or respect for human aims! She will even plant yellow where yellow is *taboo*. She schemes for all

The Happy Garden

the world from China to Peru : my designs are for my little plot of four acres. Thence comes conflict in which I can by concentration, constant effort, selection, elimination, and above all, by compromise, concession, and yielding—as Mr. Robinson and experience say we must—to Nature's universal laws, enforce my will. There is a sort of tacit charter between us : each says to the other :

“ Thus far and no farther shall you go.”

If either oversteps the limit, the result is in the one case chaos, in the other trim ugliness—villadom. That is not to say that I believe Nature to be inimical to man or me. The point of cleavage comes, to my mind, in this : that Nature is far too busy to notice me or to try to discover what I am doing ; so, if I wish to maintain pleasant relations with her, I am forced to try to find out what she is up to, and, wherever necessary, to adapt myself to her. . . . Perhaps that is rather grudgingly stated : such adaptation is always necessary. And, though it feels very emancipated to think that I buy my seeds in little packets, and bulbs by the score from Holland, and heaths from Derbyshire, and trees, from Japan and America, yet my slavery is really only the more profound, for I have to discover what provision Nature makes

Annuals

for each of my purchases, and re-make the soil, and give them shade or sun, north or south aspect, peat or clay, as the case may be. . . . There is nothing like making things grow for putting you in your place : and that is why the poor in London and the other "gardens defiled" feed the hunger which comes to them as they lose their sense of orientation by growing geraniums and convolvulus and daisies in pots on their window-sills, or if the worst comes to the worst, mustard and cress in little wooden boxes. That is why thousands and thousands of children who have never seen green fields, and clean trees, and the open sky, long for flowers to remind them that all the world is not hard and cruel and dull and grim : they long for flowers to feed their dreams. . . . Green fields and trees and sky, flowers and fruit, bring love and pride into wretched lives : love in dreams, pride in the knowledge that, in spite of misery and sordid streets, and squalor, there is nothing more lovely than the heart of man. . . . Lives in which one faint youthful glimmer of romance makes all the rest worth while, are fortified in their sorrowful faith by these tokens that what little gleam there was, was true, a spark of enduring light. Flowers are poems to the inarticulate millions to whom words have no music : and for

The Happy Garden

whom the poets sing in vain.—God walked in the garden of T. E. Brown, and another poet who lived in wretchedness, has sung :

*“ While the trees grow
While the streams flow
While the winds blow,
We will be free!
Free as trees growing,
Free as streams flowing
Free as winds blowing,
Evermore free.”*

That is the sort of thing which is detestable to Elisabeth, who is Puritan to the core. Hers is the temper that looks forward to the day when she will be enthroned in a crystal house and provided with a telescope with which to look down upon and gloat over the tortures of the eternal inmates of the pit, as she gloats over the miserable victims of society whom she pretends to reform. She is dishonest and immoral, and is really having a splendid time with her conscience. She is one of those whom the same poet transfixed with :

*“ Let those who stickle for a Hell
Have it—They deserve it well.*

The which metaphysical excursion must be forgiven me, because it is impossible for those who have flowers not to think of those who have none, and such thoughts do inevitably lead back to the

Annuals

region in which rich, and poor, and good, and bad, and vice, and virtue, are all one, the region in which the poets dwell, a region, not as is generally supposed, high above the world of actual things, and commerce, and stocks, and shares, and food, and household requisites, and law, and police, and crime, and companies, and Harrod's Stores, and music-halls and cinematographs, and slums, but, as I have learned in the happiness of my garden, *in it*, pervading it all. It is not a refuge from the storm and stress of life : *it* is the region nearest life, the depths on the surface of which is everything, from Buckingham Palace to the vilest slums in Glasgow.

Which brings me back to annuals. I fancy they like being treated as herbaceous plants. It is a sort of promotion. At any rate, they live up to it nobly. . . . I have known a pansy so obstinately emulous that, having fallen under the shadow of a mauve cranesbill, he grew a stalk two feet long, and poked his head up out of the thick green growth. He had outgrown his strength, poor thing, and did not live long, but at least he had asserted himself.

I am not certain whether it is bookishly correct to end a border with an apple tree, as mine does : an apple tree that bears the finest fruit of any in

The Happy Garden

the garden. Taking everything into consideration, I am inclined to think it right in that particular instance. It grows over against the rose and honeysuckle archway that leads to the upper lawn, and prevents a too abrupt end. Purple geranium lives beneath it, and peers up into the branches, so that the plants themselves have no rooted objection to its presence.

A border has to be designed, like a piece of sculpture, to be seen right and convincing from every point of view. The apple tree is, of course, years older than the border, and its presence gives the sense of accident which both relieves and accentuates design. It is bizarre, but it falls into place as duly as the borders harmonise with the slope of the lawn, and the general lie of the land. In a garden where there is no view to build up to, each little vista leading on and on to the final purview out over the wide world and the kingdoms thereof, each nook and corner has to be made an independent principality exactly defined and yet fitting so nicely into its place that the whole is an empire of inter-dependent states; an empire whose government is seated in the brain of the designer, a government conducted with no rules or laws save the first principles of Nature, who, in the commonwealth, is Lord High Chancellor,

Annals

Chief Justice, Executioner, and Lord High Everything Else. The paid gardener is Chief of Police, Nurse, and Conductor of the State Crèche.

My garden is so situated that the world and the kingdoms thereof lie outside and beyond, and, therefore, it must be a microcosm, a world in little, reaching not outward and beyond, but, like the pines, directly upwards. That is a limitation that makes excellence both easier and more difficult; easier, because the dimensions of the dream are smaller; more difficult because the standard and the test are not to be had for the mere mounting to an open place. There is a danger in the pines as a background, for they give such a glow to colour that even discord and disharmony will look well, and even failure can give something of the pride and triumph of success. There is the same peril in a garden so enclosed as there is in the mysticism of the poets who seem to lose their sense of the visible world—and to devise systems which are logically perfect though they have no life. So might a garden, without becoming conventional, suffer by the imposition of a new convention and become as stiff and frigid, though not quite so ugly as the old gardens of beds and patterns.

Another danger is the acceptance of failure and the “good enough” as “good.” That has a

The Happy Garden

horrible cumulative effect. Though gardener and designer cease to work, Nature does not, and under the constraint of designs half created, or plans that have gone awry, she produces all sorts of monstrosities in her effort to force her way back to her own rhythm and her own method of doing things.

Rhythm is perhaps the best word to convey what it is in Nature that the designer has to catch and feel, and it is precisely because the relation is so subtle and so fine and exacting that rules and general statements are so perilous. A statement is not religion : codes of positive rules are certain to be misinterpreted and to lead to misconception and blundering action : certain things—a very few—are wrong in all cases and for all people and all gardens. I am no counsellor, hardly at all a theorist, and I have no more science than necessity bids. The aim here is to express my garden in words and to give only such general laws as can be argued from my particular case. . . .

The pleasure of a garden is to feel it growing under your hand, and the greatest pleasure is to be had when you feel that, given the soil, and yourself, and your particular financial resources, and the immediate surroundings, it must be so and not otherwise : that is, when the garden grows with your own growth.

Annuals

So it is with the annuals. Year after year I did as I was bid and had narrow borders for them, or put them here and there, wherever there was room to spare, with the most unsatisfactory results, and an amount of work and worry which was never justified by the result. I wanted to be bold and yet lacked boldness. . . . Then came a time of greater intimacy with the garden, of a keener sense of rhythm, and I took my courage in both hands, wrestled with the new idea, resolved to have all beds and borders as wide as possible, and invented my double border with its grass paths, in which the herbaceous plants should not only provide shelter for their cousins, the annuals, but show off their beauties to more advantage.

The result is that in these all-important borders, so near the house, there are flowers right through from April to September, and, in good seasons, even later.

The annuals that I chiefly grow are antirrhinum, pale yellow and pink and deep red; salpiglossis, deep blue; scabious; nigella Miss Jekyll; asters, mauve and pink; salvia patens—which is really herbaceous, but not quite hardy, although it will live through the winter in one of the borders—these are put in in large clumps and go well with the dark-blue delphiniums and purple cranesbill—

The Happy Garden

mignonette, phlox Drummondi, and poppy Miss Sherwood ; planted in large groups, running in and out of each other so as not to be too formal, and so as to mingle with the bold patches of mauve and white campanulas, English iris and pink mallow.

The beautiful blue phacelia grandiflora, of course, is grown, but that is reserved for the border along the wall, where it tumbles over the stones of the courtyard. Canterbury bells are in the big borders, but larkspurs are allowed among the other annuals.

Each aspect has its own individuality. At the orchard end the borders terminate in lavender hedges. Pillar roses—Rubens, Euphrosyne, Leuchstern and a white single rose—mark it off from, and introduce it to, the lawn, where, at a little distance, there is a great bush—four or five yards through—of the single white polyanthus rose, the beloved of Miss Jekyll, whose books are a necessary part of every gardener's development. As Browning said of his wife—a remark which has always curbed my admiration for the poet—"To love her is a liberal education" . . . To introduce Miss Jekyll's books to a house is almost enough to make a garden grow about it. To introduce them to a contented gardenless woman is a social danger. . . . In practice there is only one reason to quarrel with Miss Jekyll. She is merciless. With seedlings she



THE ANNUAL BORDER IN SEPTEMBER; TOBACCO PLANTS,
ASTERS, AND AUTUMN LILIES

Annuals

is ruthless, for she is a tidy housewife—or garden-wife—who will tolerate nothing, be it never so beautiful, out of its place. She has no more feeling for a seedling Shirley poppy than for the wickedest of weeds (which the French call so aptly *mauvaises herbes*). Now, in my light, sandy soil, everything delights to seed itself, and often when some flower has ensconced itself in some entirely inappropriate place, I have not the heart to pluck it out. It may be weakness : but I confess it without shame. I should never dream, for instance, of uprooting anywhere Miss Jekyll's triumph, the nigella or love-in-a-mist, the lovely blue flower nestling in its frail foliage, almost like a patch of sky reflected in the water of a green stagnant pond : surely one of the tenderest and most intimate flowers of all : and its sweet name is not half sweet enough.

Sometimes too great a liberty is taken—poppies especially are apt to take advantage of the least indulgence, and then I am as ruthless as the most professional of gardeners. If flowers will misbehave themselves and grow like weeds, they must be treated as such :—

*"I will go root away
The noxious weeds that without profit suck
The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers :"*

The Happy Garden

which are lines not among those thousand which Ben Jonson thought Shakespeare had better have blotted out, though they are not enough to justify the disputants in saying that Shakespeare was Bacon, or that the poet was at one time a gardener by profession.

And here by the rose and honeysuckle pergola, adorned also with kerria japonica ("old men's buttons"), which is yellow, though inoffensive, since it blossoms early when few other flowers are out, is Jane murmuring to herself in a sort of hurt, rapt way:

"Woman is unutterably more wicked than man, and more clever; goodness in a woman is a form of degeneration."

Nietzsche!

She could not have remembered it if she had read it. Elisabeth must have been talking to her. Elisabeth wants to make her think. *I* want to make her feel:—

*"You must love the light so well,
That no darkness will seem fell,
Love it so you could accost
Fellowly a livid ghost . . ."*

(Even Elisabeth)

*Light to light sees little strange
Only features heavenly new:
Then you touch the nerve of Change
Then of Earth you have the clue:
Then her two-sexed meanings melt
Through you, wed the thought and felt."*

Annals

And, since one is quoting for the benefit of Jane, one may as well add the words of Ludwig Börne, which Heine thought good enough to place at the head of his *Harzreise* :

“Nothing endures but Change: nothing is certain but Death. Every heart-beat deals a wound, and life would be no more than a slow bleeding to death were it not for poetry. It preserves to us what Nature denies: a Golden Age which does not perish, a Spring-time which never fades away, happiness without a cloud, and everlasting Youth.”

Gardening is a sort of poetry, and a garden is a poem written not in words, but in the changing (and enduring) fairest forms of Nature.

Come, Jane !

The TOY RIVER



For this is the house
of enchantment,
Roll on grinding
wheels of the world
.....You are
not heard here”

VIII

The Toy River

THE ideal dress for work in the garden is the tunic worn by girls in the gymnasium. This, with stout knee-pads for protection against the damp ground—for women can never, like ^rmen, do all their planting and weeding stooping—is business-like and comfortable. I have not yet had, I confess, enterprise enough to adopt it, and my customary garb is a short skirt of serge bought for four-and-sixpence, ready-made in Manchester. My conscience, when it is allowed to speak, tells me that it is the product of sweating, and, when I listen, I am very sorry, though my sorrow takes no practical shape. Once one begins to think of the injustice to others necessitated by his own existence then there is no end to it, and it seems absolutely certain that one ought to be abolished. . . . And I am often almost sincerely convinced of the necessity of my own abolition, and that I have no right to sit down in my pine-wood, while others are ground down that I may have food and clothing and the

The Happy Garden

few luxuries that I need, and above all the priceless boon of leisure. Why should I be free to choose my own work and to do it in my own time ?

I confess that I thoroughly enjoy these speculations (especially at moments when the weather is oppressive, or the garden has been ravaged by some pest) until I begin to perceive that they are leading me towards Social Reform, and those amiable people who wish to abolish everything but themselves, beginning with human nature, which, being human, they detest, and are quite determined that everybody shall have a thin gruel-fed happiness, cut to their pattern, and not the sort of happiness which they take because it is their nature to.

The point I am coming to is the consideration of Leisure, and the only question which seems to me to arise is this : Are you, or are you not, worthy of Leisure ?

That can only be answered by Life. In this world either you have Leisure, or you haven't : either you are ground down in the machine or you are not. If you are worthy of Leisure you will have it by hook or by crook, and money or no money will matter very little. True Leisure is not bought with money, which blows where it listeth. It does not follow that those whom

The Toy River

money has lifted out of the machine will possess Leisure : very often their last state is worse than their first, and exhaustion is succeeded by the even more cruel affliction of boredom. . . . The boredom of the rich is infinitely more cruel than the boredom of the poor. . . . Leisure is a thing so precious that the unworthy lose it almost at once by emulating the dog with the bone and the shadow. To such people, Leisure means Doing Nothing, which is the very last thing in the world that it does mean. . . . If it can be translated at all it means Doing the Right Thing at the Right Time, and the dream of the visionaries is of a Golden Age when all shall have Leisure and all shall be worthy of it.

*"I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."*

When Blake wrote "Jerusalem," under the influence of Swedenborg and the Book of Numbers, he meant Leisure, as is shown by the note :

"Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets!"

That is : people with leisure to prophesy in words and stones and paint and houses, and every art and craft, and trade and profession, at least,

The Happy Garden

such as there were left when human beings had given up doing the wrong thing at the wrong time.

I may or may not be worthy of my own Leisure, but if I am not, it is very certain that in due time I shall lose it, and all that I have done with it, including the river. If it is to be so, so be it. In the meanwhile, let me take pride in it and discover it from its source down.

There are two different waters on the estate—three, counting rain-water. There is a spring from which the best supply is drawn by a pump in the kitchen. The rest comes chalky from the main of the nearest company half a mile through the woods. That is “laid on” both in house and garden. The river runs from the top by the old gate. Its source is overhung with honeysuckle and set about with roses and lavender. . . . As a matter of hard fact, it rises through an iron pipe set in a gravel path.

It runs intermittently: that is to say, when the water begins to stale, the hose is turned on and a fresh stream flows to the delight of the goldfish and the water plants and the profit of the company. (These romance-destroying details are not for Jane and Elisabeth.)

The river has a history.

Time was when in the unregenerate past, the

The Toy River

south side of the garden between the nut walk and the rock-garden was a waste of very indifferent and useless lawn leading up a grass bank to a tangled shrubbery, which it was impossible to enter. The place was never entered, except when there were wild raspberries on the bank.

It was a disgrace ! It was the slatternly bedroom which suffers in so many houses, so that the drawing-room can be crammed with useless and obviously expensive *bibelots*. In those days it is very certain that I had no leisure, and deserved none. However, as the sundial remarks : “ *Time can do much.*” And in this case, time brought energy and perception that the whole garden was out of balance, while there remained that disgraceful tangle.

The first impulse was to destroy, but, before destruction, it is necessary to have some constructive idea, however vague.

My constructive idea was the wildest possible : —to have a river where no water was : a river and a lake.

With that determined on, the next thing was to have the ground cleared and left as blank as a painter’s canvas. The grass was found to be bad and was taken up. Upon practical reflection, it was discovered that there was quite as much lawn

The Happy Garden

in the garden as the gardener and boy could manage without working twenty-five hours a day during the summer. Therefore, the cleared space should not again be sown with grass. It could not be left in its sandy nakedness, and inspiration supplied peat. . . . All through the miles of the wood there is a carpet of peat and moss and pine-needles two or three inches thick. Nothing was simpler than to roll up as much as was required, and lay it down again where the old useless lawn had been.

The pine trees could have no cause of complaint because they have very little else to do, when they are not singing and shying cones at the squirrels and each other, save to weave this self-same carpet. Like Clotho, or Lachesis, or Atropos—I can never remember which—they never cease weaving.

So then, the floor was clothed in a fashion surely delectable to the lilies and the heaths and the azaleas, who later on should take up their dwelling there. The ground was not level. It was banked on either side, and terraced where the grassy bank below the shrubbery used to be.

Having two levels there must be steps: and these were built of bricks left over from the court-yards.

On either side shrubs were planted: rhododen-

The Toy River

drons to the left; to the right, as a wall against the green of the rest of the garden, were groups of ribes, berberis, philadelphus and lilac. Along the cherry walk, two steps down from the level of the peat, grew in old days a hedge of Penzance sweet brier. This was trimmed and bent to make a sort of balustrade, low enough to give a free view down into the croquet lawn, and not to hide the cherry trees in blossom.

Here and there were planted special standard rhododendrons, a silver fir, a group of tree lupins, a catalpa tree, andromeda, various kinds of daphne, Japanese roses, and white broom. A tulip tree was left over from the old régime, and made the best he could of the new order, which was new enough to revolt him. . . . Heather was brought in from the glens and throve: all except one clump of white heather, which exhausted itself in trying to squeeze out enough good luck for such a tremendous venture. He was the only clump for miles around, and was grossly overworked in infancy. . . .

Just at this time the wave of energy which cleared the old shrubbery and the useless lawn, touched the male denizens of the estate, and the visitors, and set them all felling trees, "seven at a blow," like the little tailor of the tale.

The Happy Garden

These were exactly what I wanted. It is inaccurate to say that the river was the genesis of the peat garden. The first need was for a bridge, and from that all sprang. A bridge, if there is any sense in it, means a railway, or a road, or a river, or a canal, or a lake. It is said that the Chinese obviate engineering difficulties by building a bridge and turning a river from its course to flow under it. . . . My notion was to have a bridge from the old garden into the new, or, if one must be symbolical, from my old self into the new. The bridge was to be built of pine trees, and, discarding the railway and the road, I came to water and decided on a river. It was designed and dug out from its apparent source under a spruce tree down to the lake (or pond) in which it ends before ever the bridge was advanced beyond the stage of the decision of its site. It was to lead from the lawn to the top part of the peat-garden.

As the idea took shape, it seemed absurd for the bridge to lead only from one garden to another without the existence of any definite attraction, and the gap was filled by the arrival of a catalogue of trees and flowering shrubs. On the back of the catalogue was a picture of a Japanese tea-house overgrown with wistaria and laburnum, and set about with azaleas. In half a second that tea-

The Toy River

house was transferred mentally to the corner of the peat-garden opposite the bridge. . . . There was the needed attraction, there was the corner-stone of the scheme, the crown of the achievement. Everything was to hand: logs, wood, wistaria, laburnum, labour. . . .

It all sounds delightfully easy and magical, and as though it was done with sleeves turned back, so that there could be absolutely no deception. The idea came, as ideas do—in spite of the Positivists and Materialists and Comtists—rather like a conjuring trick, in which the Great Conjuror, who juggles with our brains and his old, old stock of ideas, while he baffles us with his ironic patter, really does demonstrate that the quickness of the hand deceives the eye. But when the trick was done, and I was left with a potential bridge, a potential house, and a potential river, there remained the conflict that follows on the advent of an idea—the conflict with Things as they Were. In this instance the arch-fiend was not deep-rooted prejudice, but trailing or rather tuberous grass, which is known as couch, quitch, or witch-grass. . . . It is of all weeds the wickedest. Leave but a shred of it in the ground, and it will twist, and wriggle, and thrust its way with the most vulgar pertinacity into the choicest beds. It disguises

The Happy Garden

itself to look like any fibrous root, and it is no respecter of persons. It has no manners, and when it meets a bulb or tuber in the ground refuses to go round, but bores its way straight through : while with roots it will twist about, and over, and in, and out, until it has strangled the life out of them. . . . This plague, this serpent among weeds, this parasite, had been left to do its very worst in the shrubbery.

War was declared, and a campaign was carried on as bloody as that of the feud of MacPherson against the clan MacTavish. It was hard labour and durance vile, and success was not complete, for still the green blades peep impudently here and there, through the brown carpet ; but enough was done to leave the ground clear for the tracing of the river's bed.

With the clearing of the shrubbery, wealth undreamed of was unearthed. There were shrubs enough to equip the whole new garden and all its banks, and large enough to wall it off from the lawn ; and there was a jolly little crab-tree, and best of all, half an avenue of birches, in a direct line with the gravel path which runs the whole length of the top of the garden. It was easy to complete the avenue by carrying it up to the spruce tree, whence the river was designed to

The Toy River

spring, and beneath it, over the brown carpet, were spread rugs of snowdrops, primroses, and daffodils and bluebells. . . . This little patch of Spring Paradise lies between the top of the nut-walk and the spruce tree, which was given a mate so that it should not feel out of it in the company of strange trees.

Not to have the wood and garden meeting too abruptly, Forsythia and Weigela and tree lupins were planted in groups on the hither side of the birches, and the Forsythia, bursting into bloom in the early spring, prepared the pine trees for all that they should look down on in the succeeding months.

Near the Forsythias a poor little cherry tree, who had been half shrivelled all his life in the shrubbery, was given a home and a comfortable bed of good mould.

That done, the work of construction began in earnest.

The winding bed of the river was dug out and over the bank it fell into a wide pond, which, when I think of it, becomes a small ocean. It is about twenty-five feet by twenty, and irregular in shape. In a little pool above it stands a terra-cotta model of the Dolphin Boy of Verrocchio, which, as all the world knows, is in the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. My rival quarrels with the

The Happy Garden

boy, and declares that he is out of place in his surroundings, especially as he does not fulfil his functions as a fountain. My rival quarrelled with him when he was in the sunk garden, and did practise his profession, and there, I am bound to say, she was right: but here, in the midst of a river which does not run, above a lake which has no outlet, it seems to me that he is rightly placed. He has a canopy of bamboos, and green arenaria grows about his feet, and he gazes down into the lake, standing on one foot, and leaning slightly forward to try to catch his own reflection in the water: which is sufficient occupation for anybody. He is beautiful enough to be suffered to be idle, though if the river ran he would have to set to and earn his living. . . . But while the water-rate is high, and an extra fee is charged for all water supplied above a certain number of gallons, it is improbable that the river will ever run.

Absurd though it is, I am as proud of it as was Naaman of Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus. It is easy to sneer at it, but it is, at any rate, deep enough to drown the moon and the stars, as anyone may see who will come and stand on the bridge at night. It is deep enough for frogs and fish and strange insects. . . . In width it varies from one foot to three feet. In depth—but



"In a little pool . . . stands the Dolphin Boy of Verrocchio"

The Toy River

wild horses shall not drag that from me. It is constructed in three reaches, a pool, a waterless waterfall, and a lake. The bed is built of bricks and rubble cemented over so that with the intermittent flow of water from the top there may not be stagnation and foul gases.

The river is bordered by dense vegetation. Rhododendrons hide the mystery of its origin, and ferns and hanging plants conceal its banks. Giant asphodel (*eremurus himalaicus* and *e. himrob* and *e. robustus*), prickly rhubarb (*gunnera*), iris, heaths, lilies of all kinds, megasea, bamboos, ceanothus, the crab tree—all are mirrored in the river. . . . Over the bridge trails wistaria, and hard by it grow white lupins and budleia Veitchii, with its handsome mauve heads. Stonecrop clammers about the rocks under Verrocchio's Boy, and on either side, along the wall that used to be the grassy slope—a wall built of pine-logs, and topped with flat stones—are iris, and love-lies-bleeding, and, hanging over, cranesbill, pinks, sunroses, and iberis.

Behind it, between the steps and the bridge, is a laburnum Adami, which bears yellow and purple flowers together. It is a freak. The unfailing Robinson describes it :

“*L. Adami* has long been a puzzle to botanists, who even now cannot account for its peculiar

The Happy Garden

character. It is supposed that it originated by grafting the purple flowered *Cytisus purpureus* upon the common laburnum, a graft hybrid being the result. The same tree and even the same branches bear racemes of both yellow and purple flowers, and sometimes the colour is a dull purple, like yellow mixed with purple. Old trees of these are singularly quaint, and not without beauty."

I must take my Robinson's word for it, for as yet my youngling has refused to bloom. Possibly it will be years before he will condescend to bear a flower either of yellow or purple, or dull purple, like purple mixed with yellow.

At the end of the lake is the Philosopher's Seat, a log standing under a weeping ash. Here the Philosopher, knowing nothing of gardening and gardener's tricks, will sit and ponder the marvels of Nature that causes rivers to flow and lakes to spread in a sandy desert. He will commend the faith that causes the wilderness to blossom like the rose, and deny the existence of everything but his own thoughts. Or, like Hegel, he will gaze up through the branches of the ash and declare that the stars are only a "gleaming rash on the sky": or, seeing two moons, one in the sky and one in the lake (or pond) at his feet, he will ardently debate as to which is the real moon, and which is the

The Toy River

illusion : and, as likely as not, he will decide to his own satisfaction that the moon at his feet is the real, since it is the way of philosophers to prefer things at their feet and to give more attentive scrutiny to their own boots than to anything else in the world. About him and about are fair things growing, but he sees them not : not the flowering andromeda, nor the rustling bamboos, nor the yellow lilies, nor the nodding osmunda, nor the iris, nor the polygonum, nor the bugle. He sits there and sees nothing but his own boots, and the roar in the trees is to him only the rushing mighty wind of his own thoughts. . . . “ *I am that I am* ” is not for him, though it is for all that lives and grows : for him is only a blind longing to say : “ *I am that I am not.* ” Why then admit him to the garden ? . . . It is for all and sundry, and the uneducated and illiterate are flattered when I point to the tree, and say : “ There is the Philosopher’s Seat.”

There are fish in the lake by way of making it convincing. The water is quite as wet as other water, but, without fish, there is a danger of its not being taken seriously : and thereby hangs a tale—a live-stock tragedy which shall serve for a short interlude.

An
**ALARMING
INTERLUDE**



"Nature.....sets
all her children
to live by devour-
ing one another."

James Thomson.

IX

An Alarming Interlude

WHETHER it is that flowers are not enough—as they certainly are not—or whether it is that there is an instinct left in us traceable back to the patriarch Noah, who so loved the beasts that he had to have them with him on board ship, I do not know: but give a normal healthy being a piece of land, and very soon he (or she) will set about peopling it with animals. Most novices will begin with a dovecot, as I did. . . . That is to invite tragedy and cats, and it is no consolation to know that the life of the cat is fortified by the lives of the doves. . . . Pigeons are even more disastrous, for, as like as not, they will hatch an egg and then shake off their parental responsibility by flying away to return no more.

Nine out of ten dovecots of my acquaintance are empty. I have known people who have “gone back to the land,” and have been so infected with Nature’s frenzy for propagation that all their days are given to setting birds and beasts and plants

The Happy Garden

a-breeding, to the great horror of the shade of Malthus and the destruction of their own charming social qualities. I have known at least one woman who surrendered completely to the vice of Dumb Friends' Friendship, and, when she died, her house contained ninety-six cats, thirty dogs, forty-nine birds, a parakeet, a dish of turtles, two snakes, three salamanders, and a monkey, together with an indescribable litter. It did not contain another human being, and, indeed, her dumb friends had alienated all her others.

These are, of course, extreme cases.

Less extreme was the case of a family in London, who could bear no thought of cruelty to animals, and when some relations sent them some live lobsters from Scotland, they, hearing that lobsters scream when they are boiled, spared their lives and laid them in a fresh-water stream, where they died horribly and slowly of suffocation.

The same sort of tender-heartedness makes other people gorge their cats to biliousness with salmon, and feed their dogs until their skins are blown out as tight as a drum. There are women who will hug their cats and slap their children : ladies who will take their dogs a-visiting, and to the pantomime, and never go near their nurseries. And to such a pitch has the craze for animals grown that

An Alarming Interlude

there is actually a shop in a West-End arcade where there are sold coats, and collars, and boots, and handkerchiefs, and walking-sticks, and ties, and jewelled tie-pins for dogs.

It is no new thing, and almost all the follies to which the alliance between dogs and men has given rise are recorded in a certain chapter of Montaigne.

Dogs and other animals, it is to be observed, take their character from their masters, or, as the Theosophists put it in their transcendental way, dogs and beasts can be helped upward in the scale by those with whom they live, who then are weighted with a certain karmic responsibility. One thing is certain, that no dog can be turned into a religious animal by contact (or anything else for that matter): that is, it cannot pass beyond the line of demarcation between dumb consciousness and the consciousness which is so acute that it must speak. Dogs at their very best can sympathise with men only up to a certain point: beyond that they are baffled: for beyond that lies all—because they do not understand—that makes them regard men as Gods.

As to cats, it is impossible to theorise.

All this is not so far from the subject as might appear at first sight. It serves to indicate that,

The Happy Garden

though there is a growing animal population in the garden, I am under no sort of infatuation, nor attacked by any dizzy craze as a result of leaving London for the country.

I began with the assertion that flowers are not enough and I adhere to it.

A cat is necessary to keep down rats, mice, and moles, and also to show the birds that they cannot have things all their own way.

Dogs are necessary for themselves. Also it is difficult for any man or woman to reach old age without ever having possessed a dog. They happen. They attach themselves to you, or they suggest occultly to their owners that they should be given to you, or you find their captivity in a small cage in a shop window unendurable;—there are a thousand and one ways of acquisition, a million and one points at which the paths of particular men and particular dogs cross.

Beyond dogs and cats, the beasts proper to a place are dictated mainly by circumstances and growth.

When the rest of my garden revolted against the shrubbery and the old useless lawn and forced me to make a peat garden and the river, lake, and bridge, and when the transplanted trees and shrubs were slow in coming to leaf it became necessary to

An Alarming Interlude

have something moving to enliven the place. . . . First imported were the fish, the gift of Hookie's father, who is, like Polonius, a fishmonger. Gold-fish, he tells me, are the albinos among fish, and the first batch of a dozen with which the lake was stocked were Gold Orfe, which are said never to die of a change of water.

They died !

Inquisition and cross-examination revealed the fact that they had been tipped straight from their own cool can into the rather warmer waters of the lake, and the sudden change was too much for them.

Hookie's father tried again—there were two survivors of the Orfe to show that the pond was not poisonous—and this time presented me with about thirty carp. With infinite care these were installed in the pond and the three reaches of the river, and all seemed well.

They were fed on ants' eggs, semolina and worms.

The lake gained in dignity and importance. It was large enough and sound enough to support life in a shoal of carp.

Encouraged by this success we learned that the land was envious of the water. Why should it not also support animal life ?

With the heat of the sun striking up from the

The Happy Garden

peat, and the pine-log wall, and the stones of the waterless waterfall, the kind of beast to be invited was easy to decide.

Six lizards were ordered from Gamages.

Four were let loose in the peat garden, and two in the rock garden over beyond the hedge of flowering shrubs. They were eighteen inches long and brilliant green in colour. Three of them took possession of various crannies under the rocks; one was last seen among the peas at the farthest extremity of the kitchen garden, and the rest "are not," as the Bible says.

Those who are left seem to have so many household duties to perform in the morning that they never appear until the long shafts of the late afternoon sun fall across the garden, and from four-thirty onwards it is regularly part of the day's programme to hunt the lizards. . . .

When bog-bean was fetched from the lake in the woods for the toy lake, unwittingly there was brought with it frog-spawn, and, one morning, it was seen that the water was black with tadpoles enough, if they lived, to stock the Caspian Sea with frogs.

Strange insects appeared, and, though the water comes from a tap, it seems to be inexhaustively fruitful.

An Alarming Interlude

The tortoise has been mentioned, and he plays no part in this tragedy or comedy.

All was peace and fruitfulness in the lake, and every day a lizard that had taken possession of the waterless waterfall came out to bask in the sun on a cushion of moss, and to survey the kingdom of which she seemed to be persuaded that she was queen.

Here, at last, was peace on earth and perfection : a little outcrop of the Golden Age, and all was gold and summer-green. Peacefully the golden carp swam and darted in the lake : peacefully the lizard basked, and all around the shrubs and trees put forth leaf and blossom.

Then I overstepped myself.

On a visit I made the acquaintance of two small ducks—Indian Runners : one black, one brown, with a white ring at the base of his neck. These ducks had never seen water in their lives. They were, I was told, the very paragon of ducks, the very ducks for a peat garden. They had all the charm of ducks, with none of their vices. They would not eat seeds, or flowers, or young vegetables : they would devour only grubs, and slugs, and worms, and noxious things. . . . Nothing, I was told, would induce them to murder or even to assault an innocent fish, and they would treat lizards with deference and respect.

The Happy Garden

I believed it all, and carried away the ducks. That was a Thursday.

They were brought home, installed, given a little green house by the lake, surveyed, admired, chortled over. They were very pretty and had tremendous washings in the water.

On Friday they were even more charming, until, in the evening, I saw the brown bird with the white-ringed neck with something long and gleaming in his beak. . . . Gulp—gobble : and it was not for a moment or two that I realised that I had been cozened and cheated and betrayed. . . . These were no innocent ducks that I had introduced to my Eden, but ravening monsters, who, instead of the idyllic comic opera names I had given them, should have been called Gorging Jack and Guzzling Jemmy, and that poor Little Billee would never live to be made Commander of Seventy-Three.

Once I have been taken in, I have great difficulty in being undeceived, and I was still foolish enough to think that the golden carp might have found its way into the duck's beak by accident, or misadventure : and I left the ducks on the pond and slept on the problem.

Ducks or Gold-fish ?

Next day, Billy, the sheepdog, solved it.

He is well born, well bred, well mannered, but,

An Alarming Interlude

like all persons of character, there is a streak of aboriginal savagery in his composition, and when that overmasters him, like Synge's Play-boy, he loses all sense of the difference between "a gallous story and a dirty deed." . . . It is one thing to dream of slaughter, another in cold blood to carry it out.

Something in the scent of the ducks roused the savagery in Billy. It haunted his dreams, and he brooded over it through the day.

After tea there was an uncanny stillness over the garden. The very air was affrighted and stood still. No leaf stirred. Not a breath of wind. A dark cloud came up from nowhere, and hid the sun.

I knew and yet I did not know. I was afraid, and yet some mysterious force drew me to the lake.

The black duck had disappeared, while Guzzling Jemmy lay in the middle of the lake under Billy's paws! Lilies were broken, the peat-carpet was torn and ruckled, every plant in the water was wrenched from its bed—a scene of carnage and devastation.

Gorging Jack had been buried alive in the nut-walk, but had escaped, and was sitting paralysed with terror in the heather, the most mournful travesty of a duck that ever I saw.

The Happy Garden

The would-be murderer was driven away, beaten and chained up so that his lust for blood might pass: the victims were captured and penned up in their little green house: there was not a fish to be seen.

No matter: it was the end of the ducks. Fish or no fish, the one thing needful was peace.

Sentence of punishment was passed, and there and then the ducks were removed to the furthest end of the garden: and there they are to this day, living the ordinary, dull, grubby farm-yard life of which alone they are worthy:

*“The sly, slow hours shall not determinate
The dateless limit of their dear exile.”*

In the upshot, it transpired that their coming had not been so disastrous as had at first appeared. Their illicit menu for their two days' stay at the lake was this:

5,000 tadpoles.

11 gold fish.

1 lizard's tail.

They have been presented with the bill, and have paid it without a murmur.

Still the desire for beasts is not quenched, and there are dreams of a stork, or a peacock, or a

An Alarming Interlude

Bush baby, or perhaps all. . . . Probably they will never materialise, for the tragic experiment with the ducks stands as an awful warning : though I am left wondering how country life can ever be thought dull, or why peasants ever go to seek adventure in the towns. Probably because they are peasants and can live through live-stock tragedies unmoved, just as human tragedies can pass over townsfolk without their turning a hair.

It is all a question of nerves, and London has not left mine strong enough for such raw brutalities, and I do not easily forget them.

But surely a stork could be trained not to eat fish ? . . . I wonder.

In my youth I was taught and believed that my prayers were answered immediately. If I lost a thimble, I prayed and found it.

Hardly had I uttered a devout wish for a stork than, having slept on the wish, a heron descended from the heavens ; and, as usual with the gifts of heaven, we clipped its wings.

We were at breakfast when the maid appeared holding in her arms a long-necked, long-legged creature at which she was gazing in breathless, fearful pride.

“ Good gracious ! ” said I. “ What is it ? ”

I had half forgotten my devout wish.

The Happy Garden

"A heron, ma'am," said she.

"Oh, we can't keep it."

Her face fell.

"It will fly away."

"Its wings 've been clipped, 'm."

I was thinking of an infant thrush which we had found a few days before in the garden and had given a home in a cage. It sang cheerily for three days; sadly for two; and then it died for want of company. And I had vowed in future to avoid all such tragedy. My vow had been put into practice in the case of a woodpecker which had been found in a similar plight in the courtyard. It had aimed at the roof of the study, but, the wind being too strong for its wings, it had missed its mark and been carried down to earth, where it lay cursing and blaspheming. It was taken up into the woods and left clinging to a tree, and, for all I know, it has made good use of its liberty. . . . Among woodpeckers I fancy our reputation must stand high.

How we stand with the community of the herons over the road, I do not know. They fly over the garden, but pay no attention to their young relative standing solitary by the pond. . . . And he gives no heed to them.

For we kept him. There seemed no other

An Alarming Interlude

course open to us. He had fallen from the heavens into the garden in his first flight from the nest, and, by clipping his wings, we had incurred a certain responsibility for him.

There arose the old problem :

“ Heron or fish ? ”

His first night was spent miserably enough in the fruit-garden, where he refused to eat or drink. He moped and scowled, and scorned the delectable frogs which were provided for him.

He was released next morning, and made straight for the pond. There he was headed off until the fish could be caught and placed in the pool under the bridge, and caged in with wire netting. . . . That done, the whole garden was placed at his disposal, and for a few days he had a glorious time frog-hunting. We tried him with toads, but he despised them. Frogs were his game, and he was such a mighty hunter that very soon he had destroyed them and their seed for ever.

The lizards kept well out of his way, and there was an anxious moment when it seemed as though we should have nothing wherewith to feed him. So acute was the crisis brought on by the frog-famine that there were moments when we were tempted to remove the wire netting from the pool and let him loose among the fish ; but, the garden

The Happy Garden

being conducted on humanitarian principles, the temptation was resisted.

Meanwhile, the bird had acquired a taste for company. He would follow the garden-boy round while he was weeding, and in the morning, when he heard our voices, he would come down and stand on the threshold of the drawing-room window and gaze at his reflection in the panes. He often stands there brooding and striking attitudes, like Sir Henry Irving, and his back view is like that of a pompous parliamentarian. He never speaks, but he can put whole worlds of expression into the shrug of his wing. Sometimes he becomes conscious of his Japanese effect in the decorative scheme, and stretches out a wing and a leg, and brings them round in a wide sweeping gesture. . . . These are in his soulful moments. When he wants food he is blunt and direct. He stretches his neck to its full height and opens his beak.

He has a hard, glittering eye, and for that reason has been called after a celebrated lawyer, who shall be nameless.

Twice a week there arrives food for the dogs—sheep's head, and certain unprepossessing tit-bits. When the bird's natural food gave out, he was tried with these, and, like *Oliver Twist*, he asked for more.

An Alarming Interlude

He is a lovely bird, and stands three feet high when his neck is craned, and he has a beautiful speckled waistcoat of dark-grey and white which would rouse envy in Bond Street. He sleeps on the top of a weeping elm at the end of the cherry walk, which he reaches by scrambling from branch to branch, and he puts himself to bed regularly at eight o'clock each evening.

Seeing him eat their food, the dogs have welcomed him as a brother, and the cats regard him with awe and respect. Often in the morning they are all to be found outside the kitchen door waiting for scraps ; and sometimes, when one of the dogs has had an especially fine meaty bone, the bird has been known to commandeer it with an imperious peck.

He can fly just enough to reach the rail of the bridge, and there he will stand for hours together with his neck low down on his shoulders, brooding. I think he never dreams of higher flights. He has flung away ambition.

Is he happy ? Is a bird that cannot fly happy ? . . . He has more food than he would ever have in the wild state, and he likes to walk on carpets. He will come into the house and tread daintily, caressing the thick pile of the Donegal carpet with his feet. He follows us about, and has more than

The Happy Garden

once evinced a desire to go for the morning walk with the dogs. . . . Some day I shall allow it.

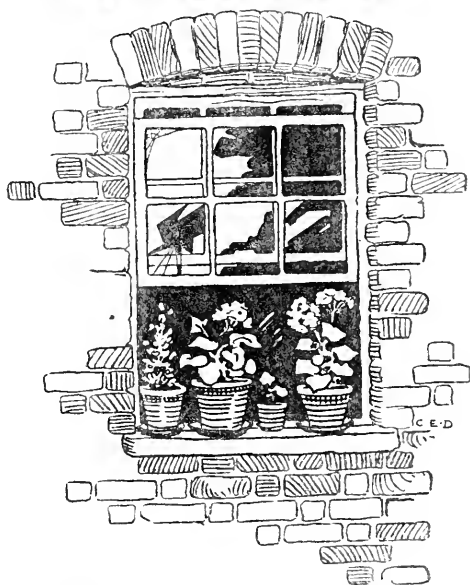
But is he happy ?

I fancy there are no great domestic ties in heron families. Children easily forget their parents, and the bird has probably lost all thought of his kindred in the tree-tops not half a mile away. . . . And, then, does not happiness consist in making other people happy ?

The heron has made me so. He has blotted out the baleful memory of the livestock tragedy, and given me the very finishing touch I needed for my brown garden with its toy river and Chinese bridge.

He plays a part in life, and beast and man can ask no more.

GARDENER'S FAITH.



"This invisible gold does not necessarily diminish in spending. Political economists will do well some day to take heed of it, though they cannot take measure."

Unto This Last

X

Gardener's Faith

IN the industrial centres, children are regarded as a commercial asset, to be turned to profit as wage-earners in the years between the day when they leave school and the day when they marry, and to provide a pension for their parents when they are past work. . . . The analogy, like most analogies, is false. There never arises a point in the career of a garden when it becomes self-supporting, but after a certain period there does come a time when waste and mistakes may be turned to profit. There is probably no corner which does not contain some plants, or trees, or shrubs, living in obscurity, and denied their full effect, and when there is a new scheme toward the result is infinitely more satisfactory if it be achieved with materials ready to hand rather than with costly and rare plants purchased at vast expense, though, to be quite honest, I am aching to order from Gauntlett's some of his wonderful and lovely Japanese trees, etc.

The Happy Garden

As it is, with the peat garden, outside the cement, a few bulbs, a few lilies, a hundred heaths, the Adami laburnum, and the catalpa, the expense was nothing, and four pounds would cover the “dem total,” as Mr. Mantalini would have called it, and for this “ridiculously small sum” the design of the garden was accomplished, and, with the toy-river, the lake, the bridge, the tea-house, and the succession of flowers, a place of enchantment was provided—the fantasy and poetry to the prose of the rest of the garden: just such a garden—in miniature—as that in which Heine first read “Don Quixote”:

“And, as I pronounced every word aloud, being still unpractised in reading, birds and trees, stream, and flowers, were able to hear everything, and, as such innocent creatures, like children, know nothing of the irony of the world, they too, even as I, took everything in earnest and wept with me for the sorrows of the unhappy knight, and an old veteran oak sobbed, and the waterfall wagged his white beard the more and seemed to cry out upon the wickedness of the world. . . .”

But, in the brown garden, it is possible to forget the wickedness of the world, or, rather, to feel that it is no great matter after all, since, with all the muddle, and confusion, and meanness, and gossiping, and worrying about other people's business,

Gardener's Faith

there is a remarkable amount of good in it, and one ray of truth, one word of honest friendship can banish evil and relieve oppression. . . . And I have told what a brave time Don Quixote has of it hunting down the villains of romance, and best of all for him is when he pins to earth all the imitation Quixotes who have been let loose upon the world since he laid down his lance, and passed into the regions of immortality with all the mighty heroes and warriors who have fought the good fight of the world's youth and purity :

*"Here shall you see
No enemy,
But winter and rough weather . . ."*

Winter is no such great enemy neither. There are red berries on the berberis and the briar hedge : certain old flowers bloom persistently, and certain others hurry forward and arrive breathlessly to announce the coming of the distant army. There is such shelter that the winter sunbeams are caught, and those of summer do not all escape. . . . There is no need to make a costly journey to the South of France or Italy, for a walk across the garden is just as good. Two minutes will take you to Nice, and in ten, you will find, over the hill, such a sun as you would have to go as far south as Sorrento to come by.

The Happy Garden

And for rough weather : rain does but bring new mystery to the pine-woods, and snow is an added glory. I have seen the pines in a blizzard white and black in halves like the old bisected poster of the "Spider" in "The Silver King," that villain who was swell by day and ruffianly murderer by night. . . .

In the cherry-walk on the other side of the brier hedge are Jane and Elisabeth, and I hear the severe Fabianish voice declaring that beauty is a snare and happiness a delusion.

That sort of jargon is intolerable in the cherry-walk : how the trees and the roses must despise humanity when they hear it. Jane and Elisabeth must be brought back into the book for safety. Heaven knows what they have been up to, or what sociological proselytising Elisabeth has wrought among the flowers. . . . Jane is trying to look unhappy. Good gracious ! "Because you are virtuous, are there, then, to be no more cakes and ale ?"

Elisabeth shows a disposition to argue, and Jane looks scared, for she has a fatal facility in grasping points of view and is inclined to agree amicably with both of us—severally. With the two of us she is torn asunder and her poor little head begins to ache.

Gardener's Faith

I will not argue. They shall be led round the garden and made to admire and smell every flower separately, and if Elisabeth becomes restive, she shall be presented with facts and figures of the cheapness of it all, and she cannot help but appreciate that.

Economy does not mean thrift. Economy, I take it, means getting twenty shilling's worth for every pound, and with skill and knowledge it is possible to make a sovereign carry the purchasing power of a five-pound note. The only valid rule of economy is this: "You cannot both eat your cake and have it."

Strict observance of this rule puts money in your purse and leads you almost automatically to the selection of the right and best sort of cake: with the result that energy, which is the only real capital and wealth, is economised and waste is reduced to a minimum.

"Energy," I find in the dictionary, defined as "*Interest, power, vigour, spirit, life.*"

When that is considered and digested, it will be seen that to translate energy into terms of pounds, shillings and pence, is to go round two sides of a triangle instead of from point to point. Economy in money is impossible without economy of energy; and here we touch the root of Elisabeth's fallacy,

The Happy Garden

From much and overmuch reading of books she has come to regard people as things definite between the first word, which is birth, and the last word, which is death. She shuts her eyes to energy, and drops the thing for the symbol under a mistaken notion that she cannot have both. Both are absolutely necessary. The symbol is useless without the thing, and the thing cannot be brought into action and practical existence without the symbol. Elisabeth, in fact, can only see one side of a thing, one side only even of a coin.

As an illustration of what I mean, when I had led them from the cherry-walk to the tree lupins, and had made Jane sniff their honey-laden scent, Elisabeth drew herself up very stiffly and waggled her neck inside her hard linen collar, and said :

“ Yes, I know, it is all very well, this old-fashioned talk about the Sense of Beauty : but what I want to know is why nothing is ever said about the Sense of Ugliness ? ”

She was delivered into my hands.

“ The point is,” said I, “ that you cannot have a Sense of Ugliness without a Sense of Beauty.”

Elisabeth made no reply, and Jane sniffed luxuriously at the tree lupins, and I explained my theory of economy at greater length.

Gardener's Faith

In the garden, the whole aim and endeavour is to get the maximum effect out of the energy of the flowers, and trees, and plants, and the earth, and the gardener, and yourself : to get the maximum effect without exhaustion, so that there is an infinite reserve to draw upon. Waste of time, waste of money are as nothing : time and money are only symbols of energy, which is life, and life, as Samuel Butler has observed, is an opportunity : a thing not to be wasted, since there is no certain knowledge that it will occur again, and it is known that an opportunity disregarded brings its own punishment.

Fortunately it is not necessary to digress into theology to confute Elisabeth. The garden as it stands is answer enough for her. The garden as it will be should once for all squash her desire to reduce all classes to the level of the derelict class, which has excited her sentimental pity.

Almost all the plants and shrubs in the brown garden were transplanted from some other position in which they were languishing in obscurity. The rhododendrons were thinned out from those joining the croquet lawn to the wood, the lupins were wherever they had seeded themselves, and the iris were tucked away under the plum tree by the

The Happy Garden

garden shed. The cost of the whole thing, was in detail :

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
100 Heaths	18	0
50 Lilies	30	0
Catalpa	3	6
Laburnum	3	6
15 Gold fish	4	6
6 Lizards	9	0
	<hr/>	
	£3	8 6
	<hr/>	

The gold fish were bought to replace those eaten by the ducks. The tragedy has been kept a close secret from Hookie's father, and I hope that he will never know the fate of the greater part of his generous contribution to the new garden. Wear and tear and labour do not figure in the account, for they were a matter of love, and cannot be translated into terms of money.

The building of the bridge was accomplished without loss of life, except that of such weeds, slugs, worms, wire-worms, and grubs as were unearthed in the process. It forms the main entrance to the garden, and was opened with ceremony by the Newfoundland who marched to and fro across it three times, and in a neat little

Gardener's Faith

speech declared it available for public use. It spans the widest reach of the river, and at night there is to be seen a romantic vista up to the source and down to the lake. By day the illusion is not so potent, and the river has to be taken as a sham or not at all.

The tea-house is a noble edifice. It is hexagonal :

*"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree . . ."*

It has a rough conical roof of wood covered in with tanned felt. Six posts support the roof, and these are bound together with pine-branches. Up two of the posts grow wistaria : up two more grow laburnum, and the other two are held in no embrace. . . . Outside, facing the bridge, is a cluster of azaleas, and behind, looking through the birch avenue, are daphnes, which are almost first in the field with their mauve-pink blossoms arriving before their leaves, so that they may be ready with the scarlet berries against the coming of the summer.

Inside the tea-house is shade and very little else : but, of all things in a garden, shade is one of the most desirable.

The floor is paved with stone, and in the centre, sunk deep in the earth, is a mighty log of larch

The Happy Garden

which serves for table. Deck chairs painted green mark the tea-house as a human habitation, and, for cosy untidiness, there are cushions, often a bag of semolina for the gold fish, and the butterfly net with which the surface of the pond is skimmed.

Here everybody sleeps. There was a spell cast on it in the building, and whosoever sits for twenty minutes in the house, nods, nods, and passes into the land of dreams. Sweet dreams hover there, and it is their allurements which entice to sleep. One who knows has said that we are such stuff as dreams are made of, and true economy, wasting nothing, gives liberty to sweet dreams. Everything done right begets a pleasant dream, and everything done wrong produces shocking nightmares. There may be one or two horrid little nightmares skulking about the tea-house, but they are so tiny and so outnumbered by the lovely dreams, that they can never do more than sit on the top of the roof and drum with their heels. . . . They and all evil spirits are scared away by the blue-glass ball in front of the house, which is neither more nor less than a *Witch's Eye*.

("Fudge!" says Elisabeth.)

It was bought in the market-place at Cabourg in Normandy, and is more potent than philtres, and charms, and pentagrams. All evil spirits, and

Gardener's Faith

enchanters, and witches, and dragons, fly shrinking away, because they cannot bear to see their own images reflected in the shining ball. It gives a picture of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth. . . . It is really there, because it is very pretty : for I had no notion of its magic when I purchased it.

In Russia, I am told, every garden has its witch's eye, a globe three or four times larger than mine ; and I am covetous.

In summer nights the tea-house and the bridge are hung with Japanese lanterns, and then the spirit of youth comes down, and there is an end of being grown up, and the most hardened Londoner becomes a child ; a process which I hold to be the very be-all and end-all of economy, for that state of childhood in wisdom is the surest happiness, the state in which, such as we are, we can look round on life, and the world, and say that they are very good, and know that amid all the beauty that is in earth, and sky, and sea, there is nothing more wonderful, and lovely, than human lives.

That, dear Elisabeth, is where my economy leads me : yours is sordid and leads you only to ghoulish gloating over misery, which, except you are happy, you can do nothing to combat. . . .
. . . . Jane has been to sleep. Sweet dreams

The Happy Garden

found her, and she dreamed that she was young again, and everything was tremendously alive, and trees were in blossom. Blackbirds fluted and out of the woods there came a lovely creature who sang a song to which there were no words, for none were needed. Into Jane's heart the note of the song sank, and she glowed all over and flew through the air until she came to a city, and there in the counting-house she found the King counting out his money. She said : " I love you ! "

He gave her a gold ring and went on counting out his money, and said : " Now we are married."

Jane was hurt, but, because she loved the King, she was anxious to do what was best for him, and so she let him go on counting his money, and said : " Yes, I suppose we are married."

But the song of the wood-nymph did not die in her heart, but rang out and out and filled the counting-house until the roof of it cracked and let in the sun, and the gold looked dull and vulgar, and it rolled away into the chinks and crannies of the floor. At this the King was greatly surprised, and he looked up, and for the first time in her life he saw Jane's eyes. Then Jane knew that he had heard the song that was in her heart, and she almost choked with happiness when the King set his golden crown rolling after the sovereigns and

Gardener's Faith

took out his watch, and looked at the sun, and said :—

She never heard what he said, but she had been very happy, for she knew that she had not waited in vain, and that what she had always known in her heart of hearts was true. . . .

A lovely dream : but the King is still in his counting-house, and the brightness fades from Jane's eyes as the true knowledge in her heart is crusted over once more with the knowledge of everyday.

She has gained something : she has won a little of the happiness of the garden, and made it her own.

Another triumph for economy.

SUN ROSE & SPIRÆA.



“This is an art which
does mend Nature
— change it rather:
but the art itself is
Nature.”

Winter's Tale.

XI

Sun Rose and Spiræa

LET me confess to direst failure !

Near the bridge in the lawn is a sunk garden that was once like a sarcophagus. Failure was written all over it. In the earliest days, to the right of it was an avenue of apple trees, and in my inexperience I had a notion of breaking up the wide expanse of lawn by a sunk garden grown over with a pergola of roses.

Through one winter the gardener dug and dug and after many months created a tomb. . . . Four little steps at one end of it led down to a wall and a seat. Roses grew and flourished all over the tomb, but it was useless : it was a failure, and it remained for years an object of scorn and derision. Nobody cared to sit in it : nobody could see in it the first blundering sketch of an idea. I did not see it myself until circumstances conspired to make the idea grow to maturity. . . . Then, in a flash, it became apparent that I had never really planned a tomb, but all unconsciously

The Happy Garden

had been devising a means by which an Alpine garden could be introduced without too violently offending Nature, for there is not a stone within several miles.

An unnatural and ungeological fissure in the ground might, in the order of things, reveal a sudden outcrop of stone, in which to grow sedum and sun-rose, and saxifrage. And this with a little persuasion the unnatural fissure did.

At the end by the wall the roses were cut back, and the ground was dug out and away on either side to give slopes facing north and south. It was roughly planned and left to the old gardener, who, of course, did it all wrong. His notion was that of a rockery, which is a very different thing from a rock-garden. He dug his slopes carefully, and laid his stones here and there in the mould in such a way that they served no purpose at all. Now, in building a rock-garden, even where the introduction of rocks is in flat contradiction to Nature, the aim is, or should be, to build so that the rocks support the earth and pockets are left for the plants. The easiest construction is to build a rough winding path and steps down the slope, and on either side of that to erect cliffs in miniature, in the crannies and crevices of which the earth will seem to have been left. . . . Strictly speak-



STEPS DOWN THE ROCK GARDEN

Sun Rose and Spiræa

ing, it is, of course, a fraud, but between having alpine plants and having none, I do not think the most scrupulous person need hesitate : and to have these lovely things growing in an ill-constructed place is to make them feel outlandish and unhappy.

I had to obliterate the rockery, and for three days I toiled to perpetuate the existing fraud upon Nature, who has been entirely deceived by it. The result has for three years been the greatest joy in the garden, and the very pride of the English spring. The tomb has become a dell.

At the bottom is a little pool, about which ferns and spiræas and other water plants grow, and toads and frogs live in the pool. The tortoise keeps his lettuce there, and the lizards have been seen drinking. Its waters are cooler than those of the river and the lake, and the dogs prefer it when they are consumed with thirst.

You may enter from the lawn on the north, or by the bridge on the south, but best of all is to descend the steps under the roses and walk along so that the "cliffs" rise above you on either side. They are much taller than the tallest man and, therefore, may be called "cliffs" without too wide a stretch of truth.

Above the pool rises a sheer wall of quite twelve feet. One side of this is damp, the other is not.

The Happy Garden

Therefore, one side is rich in *arenaria*, that lovely green climbing plant that stretches a mossy sheet over stones from which, in spring, rise thousands of little white starry flowers. It grows a-pace, and six inches of it will in a very short time remove all reproach of barrenness from a new rock garden. Six inches was my original stock and now I could give away a yard or two without noticing it.

Phlox Drummondii vies with the sun-rose in making large cushions on the stones over which they fall luxuriantly. I have seven different kinds, and when in flower they are a sheet of bloom. *Aubrietia* of many colours, the double *arabis*, *androsace*, *anemone*, *potentilla*, *campanula*, Japanese iris, are only a few of the plants that have made themselves so much at home that it is with difficulty that room is found for their more fragile and therefore the more treasured brothers.

There is endless charm to be found in the *sedums*, the *azaleas*, the tiny *rhododendrons*, *sem-pervivum*, the various *gentians*, and their rival in colour, *lithospermum*, whose wonderful blue is only the more vivid when hanging over a large stone. At the top of the rock garden giant *spiræas* grow, and beneath them is the *osmunda* fern, revelling in the shade, and, in the spring, while these are still under the ground, bulbs of many

Sun Rose and Spiræa

kinds peep in and out of the stones, and one never knows where next a snowdrop or a scilla or muscari, may force itself in its desire to greet the sun. Indeed, so well have the plants thrived that this year I contemplate enlarging the rock-garden, so that I shall have room for the new things that a visit to the flower shows and my friends' gardens make me cry out to possess. Every afternoon there is a search for lizards, which, if they are abroad lie on the rocks above the cistus. At an unfamiliar or threatening tread they hurl themselves, regardless of consequences, into the shrub below. Very often, though, they will lie quite still while I am planting, or weeding, or doing some of the many, many needful things that a garden is always asking for. They are very good-natured, and generally are "on show" when required. One is there for Jane and Elisabeth, the poor wretch whose tail was lost. He lies there like a broken toy.

Jane moves round to the south side for another view, and I go down to see if its fellow is anywhere to be found. Not he!

So I stand with Jane above me on one side and the stern Elisabeth on the other. It seems to be an excellent opportunity for settling all differences between the three of us. Jane shall stand on the

The Happy Garden

south side, Elisabeth on the north, and I will stand between, down in the pit :

*"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

Henleyism hits Elisabeth hard. It hits her fantastic bureaucracy in the wind and shatters her dream of an England which is a gigantic work-house. If they want to tax me out of existence, and drag me off to the State alms-house they will have to take my garden too. . . . If they destroy my garden, as it was long ago prophesied that Demos would destroy everything fair and lovely, they will be hard put to it to keep me from making another, toy-river and all, in my cubicle. . . . Nothing will induce me to wear a uniform, and one outstanding rebel will sweep away all the drab schemes of substituting an Inferno of Negation for the existing slums. . . . My faith is that nothing but gardens and the atmosphere of gardens can do away with slums. There is a slum in the soul of almost everyone, and until those slums are abolished, there will be no means of doing away with the black spots of bricks and mortar in the towns. . . .

"Have you a slum in your soul, Jane ?"

Sun Rose and Spiræa

"I . . . I don't know. . . . Perhaps I have."

"Have you a slum in your soul, Elisabeth ?"

"Certainly not !"

Elisabeth !

Denial is useless. There is certainly a slum in my own, and I don't believe I am much worse (or better) than other people.

You have seen all the garden now, and confess that there is a glimmer of light in your darkness : confess, Jane, that your code does not seem so easy to apply as it used to do : and confess, Elisabeth, that the reformation of the human race is not the trifling task you thought it ; confess that, if your schemes are to succeed, you must first abolish the human race. . . . What do you say ?

Jane coughs.

Elisabeth plucks at her gloves and clucks in her throat : "Well !" she says, "I must admit that there is something . . . !"

"Very good," say I, and on that we leave it, and more or less agree that life is a garden full of colour and joy if it be tended with humanity and a due observance of Nature's laws : else, if these be neglected, and amid unceasing change it be sought to implant a fixed idea, it becomes a barren waste. . . . Let that stand for the moral of this, my Happy Garden. Now we are all happy, or as

The Happy Garden

happy as one is permitted to be. We have all admitted the slums in our souls and smashed the idol of immaculate perfection which most of us carry about with our indispensable luggage, and we can be honest and jolly, and make brave and preposterous plans, and waste no time in trying to make life different from what it is. As it is, we must accept it, and in the allotted span make as beautiful a garden as possible. . . .

It is odd how differently the same thing will affect different people.

Jane, having succumbed to the Garden Faith, resigns herself to her conversion, and lies back in a hammock, feeling really very comfortable, and goes back to her dream of the King in his Counting-house.

Elisabeth, on the other hand, smashes her old ideals, rushes into her new faith, and cannot rest until she has begun to proselytise.

“I must go!” she says.

“Not yet,” say I.

“Yes! . . .” she says, and her eyes gleam.

“I must go up to town at once—at *ONCE*!—to tell everybody.”

She went.

FRIENDLY FLOWERS.



“ Ah, Spring was sent
for lass & lad,
’Tis now the blood runs
gold,
And man and maid
had best be glad,
Before the world is old.”

A Shropshire Lad.

XII

Friendly Flowers

No gardener can be happy, nor can a garden be successful, while flowers are handled unsympathetically, regarded as no more than so much coloured material or pigment for the creation of a picture. The Philistine and the Ungodly will scoff at any assertion that flowers have souls, and yet until it is admitted there can be no real or lasting success in the garden, and certainly happiness will wither there.

Darwin no more invented or discovered the Theory of Evolution than Buffon did, he made it popular and impressed it on the general imagination: and yet, so obstinately do old prejudices and conceits linger and hold currency, that the plain person who wishes to make an assertion of faith that smacks of Pantheism, and shows a reverence for dumb creation, must defend himself with authority and quote. Therefore, let me take refuge behind inverted commas (without acknowledgment):

The Happy Garden

“The flower has an inner meaning, hopes and fears that inspire its brief existence, a scheme of salvation for its species in the struggle for survival that it has been slowly perfecting with some insect’s help through the ages. It is not a passive thing to be admired by human eyes, nor does it waste its sweetness on the desert air. It is a sentient being, impelled to act intelligently through the same strong desires that animate us, and endowed with certain powers differing only in degree, but not in kind, from those of the animal creation.”

In their love affairs all flowers are perfectly abandoned, and they glory in it. The bees come chanting and the tenderest and most frail of them swoon away. . . . Their shamelessness makes their charm. Their flaunting colours are in celebration of their nuptials, and all their defiance makes for innocence. Prose has no measure that is not too solemn for the brief brilliant life of the flowers above ground : no doubt under the earth their days are as unromantic as the humdrum existence of the average human, and no one has ever described in lyrics their hibernation or their early struggles in the spring. Sermons might be made of them, though, if they were, I doubt if any flower in the world would ever show its head

Friendly Flowers

again, and, fortunately, those who make a trade of preaching have most often a plentiful lack of knowledge of the wonders of the world. But we, whose lives flicker, and glow, and sputter through sixty years and ten, are very properly grateful for these other creatures whose real existence is a matter of days, sometimes of hours. Something that perhaps we have lost is theirs : much that we have gained they never know. That there is kinship between us all I have no doubt, for not otherwise can I explain the delight that everyone of us can gain from even the humblest flower.

Some flowers there are so joyous that they invoke a dancing spirit, and it is recorded of Linnæus—who was by no means without a sense of humour—that, when he first saw the gorse in bloom, he wept. So the first sight of buttercups and daisies will make a grimy-minded London child kick and leap and yell. . . . On my south wall is a blue convolvulous major (*ipomæa*) that every day in June hangs out its brilliant trumpets of a colour so pure, that Jane wept when she saw it, and Elisabeth was moved, and I suffer always, for what I feel could only be expressed in verse or music, and in neither have I any skill. . . . And it is known how often flowers have helped the sick to recover, while the red rose has told many

The Happy Garden

a true tale of love, and many, many a foolish one. The joy of blue delphiniums is proof against dull care, and the peevish boredom of the grey, damp, English winter vanishes with the first peeping snowdrop.

The happiness of a garden shall be judged by the joy of the flowers. Do they grow in great masses unhampered and untrammelled? You shall know that in mind and heart the gardener was free to feel the loveliness of their glowing life. Do they grow stiffly, and according to some pattern formalised by books and convention? Then the gardener has felt no kinship with them and his plot of land has brought him no more delight than a chess-board. He has been playing a game to fill idle hours, and the flowers are not in his life, but outside it, and serve no purpose higher than that of a spectacle or gallant show.

Garden and gardener act and react upon each other, and the tending and cultivation of flowers is as self-revealing, and therefore dangerous to tackle, as any other art: for it is an art, as even so respectable a poet as Wordsworth has witnessed:

“Its object, like that of all the liberal arts, is, or ought to be, to move the affections under the control of good sense.”

My flowers are my friends, and I am loath to

Friendly Flowers

cut them, except where it is patently for their good.

The best kinds of garden roses are not very happy in my sandy soil, and until this summer have withstood all my efforts to make them put forth blooms sufficiently good to repay the labour and care bestowed on them. They, and I, had decided to part amicably, when there came a sudden *rapprochement*. Without either of us knowing how, we suddenly understood each other. They delighted to blossom in my company, and I, in return, rushed enthusiastically ahead and issued invitations to all their relatives and friends, and distant cousins, who are neither relatives nor friends, to come and join them.

Ramblers, on the other hand, manage to live triumphantly, and in two years a Dorothy Perkins has clothed completely the tall trunk of a dead apple-tree.

Lilies and all their tribe flourish and wax great. Delphiniums have prospered, even unto the tenth generation, and from about twenty roots I have now anything from two to three hundred, and every autumn have to cast out a number. So with larkspurs (the annual delphinium), and monkshood, which it is so difficult not to call aconite. . . . It is pretended in favour of catalogue Latin that

The Happy Garden

it is a sort of shorthand for the classification of sub-species among gardeners: but my experience is that it is a vice which may attack even the most devout lover of flowers. . . . For instance, I myself always say *Nigella* Miss Jekyll, when it would be infinitely prettier and more appropriate to say Miss Jekyll's Love-in-a-Mist, and, when an enchanting flower has an enchanting name, it is nothing short of barbarous to say *Thalictrum* instead of meadow-rue. This arbitrary Latin is, no doubt, useful (though at its best it is cumbrous and jaw-cracking) to professional gardeners, garden journalists, and those who write severe botanical primers; but on the lips of the amateur in the presence of "the friend from town," it is flat pedantry. There is a value in the music of a name, and if a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, it must lose half its tender charm for the unlearned who is told that its proper name is *Rosa bracteata* or *Innocenta Pirola*. . . . Where, however, you drop into French, a new charm is gained, and there is some pride in making the acquaintance of the *Comtesse de Frigneuse*, or *Madame de Watteville*, while the tenderest sentiments must be aroused on an introduction to *Ma Capucine*. On the other hand, a drop into plain English dashes the ardour of the ignoramus

Friendly Flowers

who will be disappointed in the presence of *Mrs. W. J. Grant*, though his mouth will water at the prospect of being introduced to *Baroness Rothschild*.

A rose catalogue is great fun, much more entertaining than any novel ; it is a liberal education, for it leads you into every class of society, and stirs every sentiment from patriotism to greed of gold. Occasionally, too, one learns something startling about one's friends ; for instance, I read that Mr. Maurice Hewlett is "large and bright with a white ring around the centre," and that Lord Rothschild has "a white eye, covered with yellow hairs, and is very beautiful and quaint."

And, for romance, consider the ancestry of the Damask rose. No family in England is older. . . . "It is a native of Syria (like several old-established English families), whence it was brought to Europe about 1270 by Thibault IV., Count of Brie, returning from a Crusade in the Holy Land" ; and what Byronesque visions are conjured up by the knowledge that the scarlet Martagon lily is a native of Greece and the Ionian Isles ! . . . The flowers in the humblest garden come from all quarters of the world, and they bring romance and tales of derring-do in their train.

Hollyhocks, natives of Southern Europe and the

The Happy Garden

East, are so associated with cottage gardens that they bring only homespun romance. Alas ! In my garden they will not grow well. They want richer sandy soil, and nothing that I can do will make it acceptable to them. They are susceptible to disease and perish miserably. This year we are making a supreme effort, and up to now the care bestowed upon them is meeting its reward. They have been planted in lines the length of the fruit garden, where they look like sentinels guarding the fruit ; but I must confess, I have very little pleasure in them, or any plant grown like this ; I would have every flower looking as though it had chosen its own dwelling-place, and hollyhocks, brilliant against the background of the pines, are not the same thing as hollyhocks planted in line along a gravel path.

Other flowers are difficult, and there was a time when clematis seemed to present an insolvable problem. I tried them everywhere, in borders, on walls facing east, west and south. All in vain. They grew to about six feet each summer, and then withered, as though some awful blight had descended on them. . . . At last, when I built the south wall, I planted clematis Jackmanni on the north side of it, and trained it up to creep into the sun. That satisfied it, and it has done bravely.

Friendly Flowers

In many ways a sandy soil, though it is often cursed, is an advantage. Given rich soil, many flowers will be coarse and over-fed, like vulgar plutocrats: but when there is a struggle for existence, they put forth a more delicate and finer growth.

Larkspurs will seed themselves all over the garden, and columbines, of a frail growth, have a butterfly poise that is never granted to my rivals, who swagger about their clay soil.

It means, of course, much top-dressing, and use of chemical manures. In the autumn, basic slag is dug in, which is supplemented in the spring with superphosphates and sulphate of ammonia. Chalk and clay are already there and a liberal supply of manure water is frequently given. Soot also finds its uses, and the grass and yew hedges soon recover their colour after a dressing of it. Constant thought and attention has to be expended, but for the effects aimed at—broad schemes of colour against the dark background of the woods—there is very little cause for complaint. And success is infinitely sweeter if it be won in the face of difficulties.

With such infinite variety, how shall I choose? One day I could swear that of all the flowers, the lily is the noblest and most satisfying: another day

The Happy Garden

it is the rose : and then, another day, the giant asphodel puts out his blossoms, and I could declare that nothing in all the world was ever half so beautiful. . . . In the spring, I vow that the apple trees are unforgettable, and yet, their blossoms are not a fortnight gone when I remember them no more.

I tire of splendour and seek intimacy, and then the cinquefoil is my joy, or I bend over the various families of rockfoil and mark their doings. . . . Everything satisfies. Nothing satisfies. Spring is the most lovely season of the year : then autumn has that privilege. In summer, it is very certain that neither can hold a candle to the full glory of the year. . . . And even, so changing is one's mood, there are moments when one longs for winter and heavy skies, and the frozen sun hanging like a red ball in the sky.

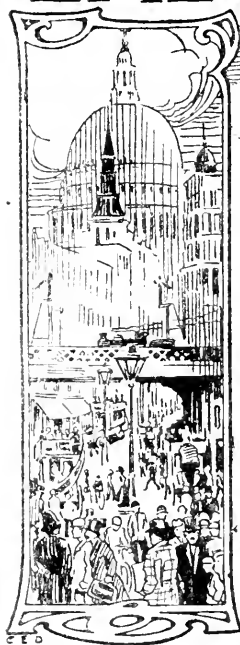
Best of all flowers are those which continue through the summer, and those which have another life in autumn :—sweet peas, and roses, and lupins, and delphiniums. . . . All is best, as good as it can be, and much better than any of us deserve. To have a real love for the earth, a love uncontaminated by books or sentimentality, to rejoice in the buffeting of the wind, and the beat of the rain, to delight in the sun and the sailing clouds,

Friendly Flowers

is to possess the rarest of treasures and a secret which sweeps away all the mists of the brain and all the confusion of life as in towns we so lamentably fail to live it.

Of that hidden treasure, of that secret of happiness, flowers are the outward and visible sign.

EXCUSE & EPILOGUE



Great things are done
when men & mountains
meet:

This is not done by
jostling in the street.

Blake.



XIII

Excuse and Epilogue

TURN to the map within the covers of this book. It conveys an idea of the garden as accurate and inaccurate as the representation of the British Empire in the All-Red maps of the Navy League. That is to say, it leaves out all that matters: but for the purpose next to hand it will serve.

It represents the garden as it is, a sound basis for building the garden as it might be. It must be changed, for, if it does not grow better, it will certainly grow worse, and the prevention of decay and deterioration is the point upon which every gardener's honour is staked. It can never attain perfection; but it can and must, year by year, reach the best possible.

It was 1910 which saw the completion of the rock garden: 1911 was made memorable by the opening of the bridge, and the creation of the river and the peat garden, by the laying down of the brick-court at the front, and the greater discipline generally imposed upon everything in the four acres. . . .

The Happy Garden

But, on the whole, it has been little more than a thorough spring-cleaning ; the real decoration is yet to be achieved, the final form is still unaccomplished. The map must be modified to conform with the ever-changing plans which crop up, and lead from one to the other like pieces in a puzzle. Indeed, a garden is very like a jig-saw, without any definite design as a guide in fitting the pieces together. . . . And that is where the fun comes in.

On two sides the garden is to be yet further taken into the wood. The peat garden is to become a Japanese garden, and a rough path is to be cut through the rising ground by the wood ; and, on high banks, on either side of it, azaleas and lilies (of the most rare and consequently the most expensive kinds) are to be planted. This path will lead to a part of the wood—where already the trees have been felled to make way for it—and a real wild garden is to grow up, a garden of happy flowers, for they will be housed as carefully and hospitably as friends : and friends they are, to be welcomed and treated kindly and with reverence, as all who do truly seek their company come to understand. So Linnæus, watching a flower unfold its petals, said :

“ I saw God in His Glory passing near me, and bowed my head in worship.”

Excuse and Epilogue

In the wide open space of the wild garden will be growing some of the nobler of hardy foliage plants, yuccas, *Rodgersia podophylla*, *Acanthus Latifolius*, *kniphofia*, *Petasites* and lupins and delphiniums and campanulas. From these large groups a path will wind down through the wood to the entrance to the lower lawn, carrying with it bluebells, primroses, anemone *Japonica*, iris *Siberica*, primula *Japonica* and *Cashmeriana*, and the many flowers that will grow naturally in a wood with plenty of room in which to increase themselves. There is no end to the lovely wild things that—as if by magic—will spring up, given but the smallest encouragement on my part. And then, on the north, another piece of the wood is to be taken in to make a tennis-court at the foot of the heather-ride through the pines. Here again there shall be a wild garden of as many flowers as care to grow in it, and perhaps a row of beehives and a place for such strange animals as may be imported in the future. . . . There, so far as I know at present—one can never vouch for the expression that accumulated energy will choose—structural improvements end. . . .

Even a gardener is an economic entity—exploded fiction though the economic man may be—and suffers from fluctuation in the markets, and the

The Happy Garden

general uncertainty of income: an affliction so general that it can be confessed without shame. The brown garden clamours for rare shrubs, but the Almighty Purse says:

“No.”

Timidly I whisper:

“Just one magnolia?”

The Almighty Purse is inexorable.

By hook or by crook—and this book is either a hook or a crook—a magnolia must be procured: and one solitary magnolia is unthinkable. There must be at least four, and to keep them company there must be azaleas, gorgeous masses of them: and the lake will never really be a lake until it is surrounded with Japanese maples. . . . There are catalogues that make the mouth water, and much trouble has arisen from ——’s show of rhododendrons, and the Temple Show sows seeds of discord every year. Flowers and frocks in the harm they wreak by their subtle temptation to extravagance, are as Woman and Man:

*“But if all the harm that’s been done by men
Were doubled and doubled and doubled again,
And melted and fused into vapour and then
Were squared and raised to the power of ten,
There wouldn’t be nearly enough, not near,
To keep a small girl for the tenth of a year.”*

And then, the delights and treasures revealed

Excuse and Epilogue

by the Japanese Exhibition, stone lanterns, and wells, and red gates. . . . !

Financially speaking, no gardener should ever go near the Horticultural Society's Gardens at Wisley, or to any of the shows, or journey on the South Western Railway past Messrs. Barr's, or on the Great Western, by Sutton's, or admit a catalogue to her house, or discuss these things with any other woman who has a garden. . . .

They waken desire, and though scientists assure us in their delightfully naive way that "desire results in form," yet that is little consolation when desire is thwarted and instead of "form," there is produced only "envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness." To an independent spirit, these states of mind are intolerable, and, therefore, as soon as may be, I propose to succumb to all the aforesaid temptations held out by the various catalogues, and to purchase magnolias, and Japanese maples, and all costly and rare herbs: lilies that toil not nor spin, and yet are more beautifully arrayed than Solomon in all his glory: anything and everything that may bring more and more colour and life to the garden. . . .

For that, and that alone, I have conducted Jane on her zigzag tour, and, since it is the custom to apologise for a book, I offer that as my excuse,

The Happy Garden

and I venture to think that no better has been put forward for the production of many better books. After all, the whole affair grew out of the visit of John Smith, who, in his automatic altruism, said :

“ Ah ! If only Jane were here ! ”

Since all the Janes could not come to the garden, the garden must be taken to them by the medium of ink, pen, paper, printing-press, photographs, book-binding, the publishers and the booksellers' shops.

In each stage of that elaborate process it is obvious that much can trickle away, and, in the end, it is doubtful whether all the Janes will be in possession of what my garden really is. If they can divine and grasp to a certain extent what it is to me, then they will have something that is a clear gain. . . . If, on the other hand, they have but a blurred impression of colour and a dim memory of the wind in the pines, then also they will have gained a little, for the lack of colour and the sounds of Nature is what the dwellers in towns do most suffer.

It is difficult for a gardener to realise that there can be any real satisfaction in reading about a garden, but I am told that such a state of mind is common among writers of books, who, when it is finished, and they have exhausted their impulse,

Excuse and Epilogue

lose all interest in it and find it incredible that there should be found others with a desire to read. . . . Such a feeling is quite proper with regard to a book, which, when all is said and done, is but paper, and ink, and pasteboard, and a deal of vanity : but a garden—even the most distorted and maltreated—is a living thing, a vital possession, and, therefore, to be shared with all who have a mind to do so, and real friendliness in their hearts. Towns are but gardens defiled, and those who live in pure gardens should let all and sundry peep into them for comfort and delight. . . . First and last, for foreword and epilogue, I would write with Montaigne :

“Reader, loe here a well-meaning booke.”

On the other hand, I fancy that no one can write a book without dreaming of Castles in Spain, and of all the wonderful impossible things that it is to lead to. . . . There you come to the region between the dream and the business, in which words cease to be available and become meaningless. When all is told of the garden, what I have made of it, and what it has made of me, there remains this hope, that the pleasure won from it and the lessons learned may be profitable elsewhere in the world than in my own small parcel of the earth.

The Happy Garden

And now we come to that awkward moment when the guest has all but outstayed her welcome.

Dear little Jane !

She has been good and patient, and though her instinct bids her distrust happiness and suspect beauty, she sighs as she rises from the hammock where she was left in Chapter XI., and says :

“ Oh ! dear . . . I have been so happy. . . .
If only John were here ! ”

We are both amused at that, but dare not say anything, and so in silence we walk to the gate. There we kiss, in silence Jane presses my hand, and she climbs up into the car and is borne off up the hill, and away to London.

I think she will come again.

APPENDIX

MOST of the flowers and plants mentioned in the foregoing pages have nicer names than those I have given them. In most cases catalogue names were used and, to avoid the perpetual awkwardness of parenthesis, it seemed preferable to me to append a list of English and Latin names side by side than to give both in the text.

<i>Acanthus latifolius</i>	Bear's Breech
<i>Aconite</i>	Monkshood
<i>Ageratum</i>	Floss-flower
<i>Alstrœmeria</i>	Peruvian Lily
<i>Anchusa</i>	Arkanet
<i>Antirrhinum</i>	Snapdragon
<i>Arabis</i>	Rock Cress
<i>Arenaria</i>	Sandwort
<i>Aubrieta</i>	Purple Rock Cress
<i>Berberis</i>	Barberry
<i>Campanula</i>	Bellflower
<i>Ceanothus</i>	Mountain Sweet
<i>Cheiranthus</i>	Wallflower
<i>Chelone Barbarta</i>	Turtlehead
<i>Daphne</i>	Garlandflower
<i>Delphinium</i>	Larkspur
<i>Eremurus</i>	Giant Asphodel

Appendix

<i>Forsythia</i>	Golden Bell
<i>Gaillardia</i>	Blanket-flower
<i>Gladiolus</i>	Sword Lily
<i>Gunnera</i>	Prickly Rhubarb
<i>Iberis</i>	Candytuft
<i>Kniphofia</i>	Torch Lily
<i>Lithospermum</i>	Gromwell
<i>Lychnis</i>	Campion
<i>Megasea</i>	Saxifrage
<i>Monarda</i>	Sweet Bergamot
<i>Muscari</i>	Grape Hyacinth
<i>Nigella</i>	Love-in-a-Mist
<i>Pelasites</i>	Winter Heliotrope
<i>Philadelphus</i>	Mock Orange
<i>Polygonum</i>	Knotweed
<i>Potentilla</i>	Cinquefoil
<i>Pyrethrum</i>	Feverfew
<i>Ribes</i>	Flowering Currant
<i>Salvia patens</i>	Sage
<i>Sedum</i>	Stonecrop
<i>Sempervivum</i>	Houseleek
<i>Spiræa</i>	{ Meadow-sweet
	{ Goat's Beard
<i>Thalictrum</i>	Meadow Rue
<i>Verbascum</i>	Mullein
<i>Veronica</i>	Speedwell
<i>Weigela</i>	Bush Honeysuckle



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